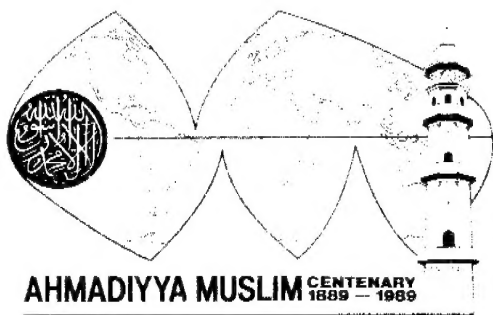


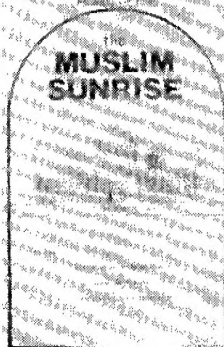
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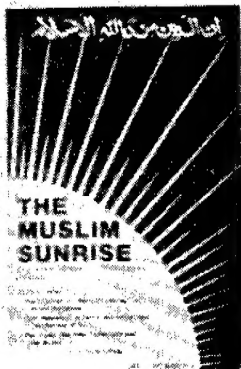


The

# Muslim Sunrise



The Muslim  
Sunrise



11



## **Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad**

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi

*Founder of Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam*



## THE MUSLIM SUNRISE

The Muslim Sunrise is the official journal of the American Fazl Mosque. The magazine is open for discussion on Islam as well as topics relating to other religions. It highlights the role of Islam in a changing environment. It provides a platform for public opinion on current problems confronting humanity and their solution. Opinions expressed in this magazine may not necessarily be those of the American Fazl Mosque.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Editorial**

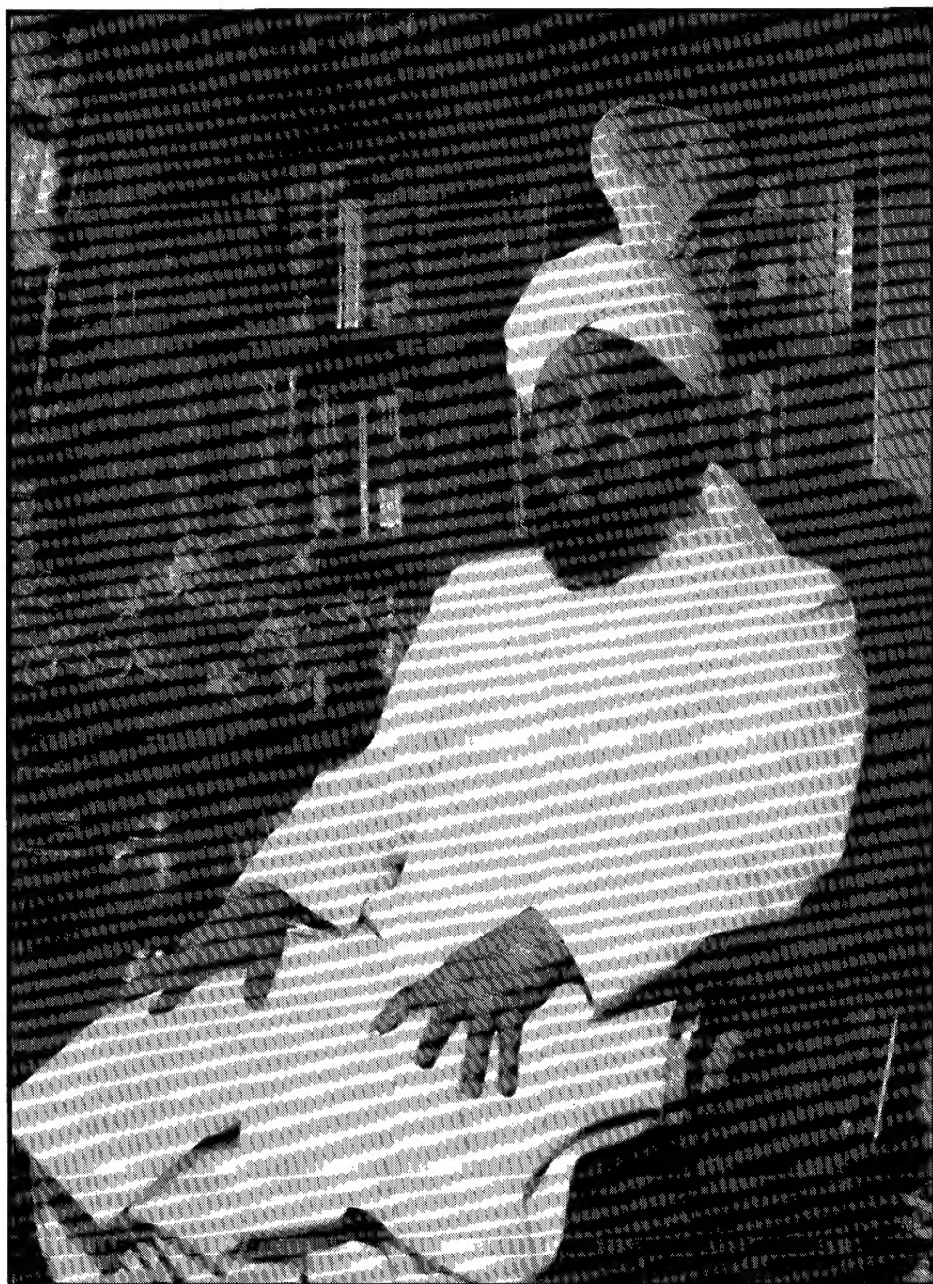
وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ  
كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ۝

Call to mind also when your Lord declared: If you render thanks, I will surely multiply My bounties unto you; but if you are thankless, lo! My punishment is severe indeed. (Sura Ibrahim; 14:8.)

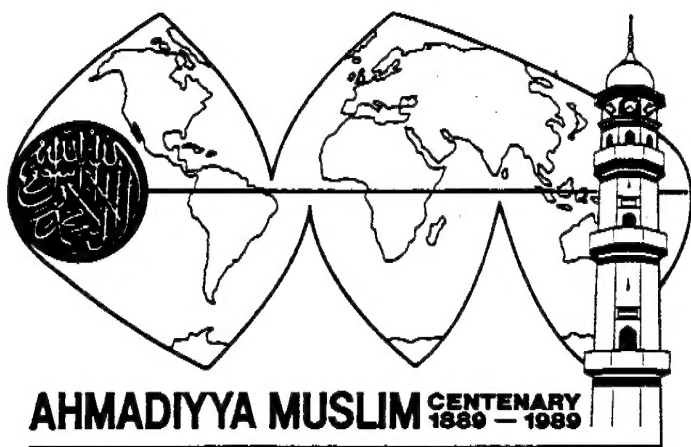
Our hearts and souls bow in complete submission and full gratitude to our Benevolent God, Who granted us the opportunity to see the dawn of the Second Century of Ahmadiyyat. At this historical junction, *The Muslim Sunrise*, through this special issue, offers its thanks by rededicating itself to conveying the message of Islam in a befitting manner to the West in general and to the people of the United States in particular. We wish to welcome the new century in the spirit of humbleness and self-improvement by revitalizing our communicative efforts. May we be successful in achieving the goals set for us through the advent of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi of Islam one century ago. May the light which came from the East shine in its full glory in the West. May the Sun of Islam, already arisen in the West, glow in full brilliance before the Second Century comes to its end. Amen.

Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad

*Imam of Worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community*



**Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad**  
*Khalifatul Masih IV*



**THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN ISLAM  
WORLDWIDE BRANCHES ESTABLISHED IN:**

\* Abu Dhabi \* Afghanistan \* Algeria \* Angola \* Antigua  
 \* Argentina \* Australia \* Austria \* Bahrain \*  
 Bangladesh \* Belgium \* Benin \* Bhutan \* Brazil \*  
 Brunei \* Burkinafaso \* Burma \* Burundi \* Canada \*  
 Congo \* China, People's Republic of \* Comores \*  
 Denmark \* Dominican Republic \* Dubai \* Egypt \*  
 Ethiopia \* Fiji Islands \* Finland \* France \* Gambia,  
 The \* German, Democratic Republic \* Ghana \* Greece \*  
 Guinea \* Guinea Bissau \* Guyana \* Holland \* Hong Kong  
 \* Hungary \* Iceland \* India \* Indonesia \* Iran \* Iraq  
 \* Ireland, Republic of \* Israel \* Italy \* Ivory Coast  
 \* Japan \* Jordan \* Kenya \* Kiribati \* Kuwait \* Liberia  
 \* Libya \* Malagasy Republic (Madagascar) \* Malawi \*  
 Malaysia \* Mali \* Mauretania \* Mauritius \* Morocco \*  
 Mozambique \* Nauru \* Nepal \* New Zealand \* Niger \*  
 Nigeria \* Norway \* North Yemen \* Oman, Sultanate of \*  
 Pakistan \* Papua New Guinea \* Philippines \* Poland \*  
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 Sierra Leone \* Singapore \* Somalia \* South Africa,  
 Republic of \* Soviet Russia (U.S.S.R.) \* Spain \* Sri  
 Lanka \* Sudan \* Surinam \* Sweden \* Switzerland \* Syria  
 \* Tanzania \* Thailand \* Togo \* Trinidad \* Tunisia \*  
 Turkey \* Tuvalu - South Pacific \* Uganda \* Ummul  
 Khairan - Emirates \* United Arab Emirates \* United  
 Kingdom \* United States of America \* West Germany  
 (Federal Republic of Germany) \* Western Samoa \* Yemen,  
 People's Democratic Republic \* Yugoslavia \* Zaire \*  
 Zambia \* Zimbabwe \* Zanzibar (Tanzania) \*



## **CENTENARY MESSAGE**

by

**Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad**

**Head of the world-wide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community**

One hundred years ago today, an amazing event took place in an obscure and tiny hamlet (Qadian), in the province of the Punjab, India. It was an event which was destined to change the course of history.

There appeared a religious leader specifically commissioned by God to lead mankind as the Promised Reformer of the latter days. His name was Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), the Founder of the world-wide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. He laid the basis for the unification of mankind in a unique manner. He resolved the conflicts and paradoxes prevailing in the religious world regarding the advent of a global Reformer.

The followers of all great religions — Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and the followers of Confucius — all anxiously awaited the advent of a Promised Reformer, as predicted in their holy scriptures.

The Jews expected the Messiah would rejuvenate Judaism; the Christians claimed that the second advent of Jesus would bring nigh the Kingdom of Heaven; the Muslims believed that the Messiah and Mahdi would join forces to bring about the final renaissance of Islam; the Hindus awaited the coming of God himself in the form of Krishna; and, the Buddhists were hopefully waiting for the reincarnation of Buddha.

How could God send different Messengers simultaneously - each calling to the same God in his own diverse way, inviting mankind unto divergent paths and conflicting ideologies? That was the perplexing question addressed by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian under Divine guidance and revelation.

It was revealed to him that all the prophecies regarding the advent of various reformers were no doubt true. They, however, infact implied



that only a single claimant would be raised who would combine in his person the qualities, role and spiritual powers of all the great World Reformers whose advent had been promised. Indeed, he would be a soldier from God wearing the garbs of different prophets. He also proclaimed that the religion chosen by Almighty God for the universal and final manifestation of His Unity was Islam.

Thus, in accordance with the Divine command, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be that global Reformer who was destined to be raised in Islam in complete subordination to Prophet Muhammad — the last Law-bearing prophet — may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

This was an astonishing claim. It was even more astonishing that this solitary voice, raised from a small, unknown village, insignificant as it seemed to the world at large, was heeded at all. Some responded to this call with complete faith and devotion. There were many others who raised a storm of hostility, the like of which has seldom been witnessed in the history of mankind.

His followers were subjected to extreme persecution. They were deprived of religious freedom and fundamental human rights. Even laws were enacted in some countries to render them liable to severe punishment and prosecution for the mere act of professing and practising their faith. Yet all this phenomenal opposition utterly failed to arrest the progress of Ahmadiyyat, which is marching forward even faster today than ever before. All the efforts of hostile fanatics, be they individuals, groups or governments, have totally failed in their purported objective of exterminating Ahmadiyyat from the face of the earth.

God stood by His servant, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, fulfilled all His promises and, as prophesied in 1898, “caused his message to reach the corners of the earth”. Today Ahmadiyyat stands established in 120 countries and the pace of its growth is destined to engulf the whole of mankind. God saved his followers (Ahmadis), protected them from all evil designs and showered His innumerable blessings upon them.

It is, therefore, to extol the name of Allah and sing His praises for His innumerable bounties that Jamaat Ahmadiyya is celebrating the year 1989 as the Thanksgiving Centenary Year.



On this auspicious occasion, I most humbly and sincerely invite all my fellow human beings to study the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam seriously to join its fold.

I call upon God, Who is All-Knowing and Ever-Present, as my witness, that the message of Ahmadiyyat is nothing but Truth: It is Islam in its pristine purity.

The salvation of mankind depends on accepting this religion of peace. Islam is the religion which does away with all discriminations between man and man, and demolishes all barriers of race, color and creed which divide humanity.

Islam liberates man from the bondage of sin and strengthens his ties with his Creator. It is a religion so simple, yet so highly organized to meet the demands and the challenges of the changing world.

Islam permits no exploitation — be it social, political, economic or religious. The political philosophy of Islam has no room for false or deceptive diplomacy. It believes in absolute morality, and enjoins justice and fairness to friend or foes alike in every sphere of human interest.

Islam neither permits coercion for the spread of its own message nor gives license to other religions to do so. Indulgence in terrorism even in the name of the noblest objectives is entirely incompatible with the teachings of Islam.

It is the firm belief of Jamaat Ahmadiyya that Islam is the panacea for all maladies and ailments of suffering humanity today. Islam teaches us that unless man learns to live at peace with himself and his fellow human beings he cannot live at peace with his God.

It is to this Islam that I invite mankind.

I am fully aware that in the eyes of many cursory observers, Ahmadiyyat has not as yet emerged as a potent force to bring about a global moral and spiritual revolution.

Yet my trust is in God. Weak and humble though we are, God has graciously chosen us as His instrument to usher in a new era of global peace and unification of mankind. Listen to what the Promised Messiah proclaimed towards the close of the last century, in the light of Divine revelation received by him:

*"The time is near when I should attain a magnificent victory, because in support of what I state, there is another voice which speaks; and in support of my hand there is another hand which operates. Yet, the world cannot perceive it, but I behold it. There is a heavenly spirit which speaks in me and grants a new life to every word and every letter of mine. A commotion and upsurge has erupted in the heaven which has caused this earthly body to stand up at God's behest. Every such person who has not been denied forgiveness and salvation shall soon see for himself that I do not make these claims on my own. Can they be seeing eyes which fail to recognize a man of truth? Can he be deemed alive who has no awareness of this Heavenly call?"*

It is likely that many will turn a skeptical ear to what I say, wondering at the certitude and firmness of my faith in the glorious future of Ahmadiyyat. The weak and oppressed proponents of Christianity, at the end of the first century of the Christian era, must have felt somewhat as I feel today. They were looked down upon, jeered and mocked at by the people of that age. Yet, I have no doubt whatsoever that a day will dawn before the end of the next century when people of that age will look back with no less an amazement at the incertitude and disbelief of the people of today.

In the end, let me invite you once again with all my heart to accept the call of the Promised Reformer. Herein shall you find peace and contentment of heart which can only be acquired by submission to the Will of God.

May Allah bless you all.



Supreme Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

## **AHMADI MUSLIMS CELEBRATE THEIR FIRST CENTENARY**

On March 23, 1989 Ahmadi Muslims throughout the world will celebrate the anniversary of their first century. On the same date one hundred years ago, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad initiated a Covenant of "Pledge of Bai'at" with all those who believed in his claim under Divine revelation and command to be the Promised Messiah and Mahdi of the age.

Ahmadi Muslims in 117 countries will usher in the joyous occasion with a day of fasting on March 22 in homage to Allah. In the early morning hours of March 23, a collective Tahajjud prayer will be held universally, continuing with congregational prayers and charitable services in thanksgiving to God for his blessings and favours in the first century.

The main event will be a Promised Messiah Day Convention. It will begin with the hoisting of National and Ahmadiyya flags and illuminations on official buildings of the Movement, each country singing its National Anthem and religious poems sung in chorus. Sweets and souvenirs will be distributed to children, and Islamic literature dispersed widely.

Highlighting the Thanksgiving celebrations will be the relaying of the special message of the Supreme Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, who is the Fourth Khalifa or Successor to the Promised Messiah. His official title is "Khalifatul Masih IV."

The calendar for the rest of the year will be filled with various events, particularly a National Convention to be held in each country, during which the public can visit the exhibitions. On display will be translations of the Holy Quran in 100 languages, books, publications, photographs, statistical charts and, where possible, heirloom artifacts from the Promised Messiah.

Hundreds of thousands of Ahmadi Muslims and their guests will attend an International Meeting, the location of which will be

announced by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV.

In honour of the centenary, the Hazrat Kahlifatul Masih IV will launch a worldwide program comprising of some 40 items described in the plan document. The program focuses on preparation for the task ahead in service of Islam to regain its lost glory and to serve humanity for its uplift, and for peace and tranquility on Earth. Through the Centenary Thanksgiving Celebrations Ahmadi Muslims resolve to instruct their youth on these values; to teach the history of the Community, its landmarks, mission and goals, seeking to ensure a continuous chain of servants of humanity with ideals and moral excellences.

### HAZRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD AND HIS MISSION

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) founded the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in 1889 in Qadian, a small village in the Gurdaspur district of the Punjab, India. Under Divine Guidance, he proclaimed to be the Promised Reformer whose advent has been predicted by many world religions. Islam being the complete and perfect code of life for all mankind, he taught that the holy prophet of Islam, Muhammad, may peace be on him, was the Final Law-bearing Prophet of God. The Promised Reformer, as a renewer within Islam, was to be a fellow-believer, a subordinate to the holy prophet of Islam.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a devout Muslim, championed the cause of Islam at a time when there was little understanding of true Islamic values even among the Muslims. Islam was at its lowest ebb--politically, socially, morally and spiritually. Islamic teachings were under attack by the leaders of all other faiths. Christian missionaries and Hindu Arya Samaj were in the forefront to criticize and ridicule Islam. To arrest the Muslim decadence and to infuse new vitality in Islam, Hazrat Ahmad resolved to set forth the truth of Islam and the utter beneficence of its teachings in an epoch-making book, "BRAHEEN AHMADIYYA." This book was acclaimed by the Muslims as an outstanding and matchless work, and Hazrat Ahmad was acknowledged as the most renowned and honoured personage in the contemporary world of Islam. He wrote more than 80 books expounding the beauty and truth of Islam. He revived the faith in ONE God, in the Prophethood of Muhammad, may peace be on him, and he established a devoted and an enthused community of Muslims who

practice Islam in its true essence: they promote peace, live in complete submission to the Will of God, and promote the cause of Islam. In his lifetime, Hazrat Ahmad successfully sowed the seeds of universal victory of Islam.

Despite bitter, abusive and, at times, violent opposition, soon the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat was to be recognized with awe and wonder all over the world as the most dynamic religious force championing the cause of Islam. At present the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat has ten million members spread throughout 117 countries, bonded in a universal love and brotherhood. They demonstrate full commitment to the betterment of mankind. Their spirit of selfless service and excellence of work is deeply appreciated everywhere the Jamaat has spread. They have built more than one thousand mosques in different parts of the world, and they have translated the Holy Quran in almost all the major languages. Their missionary work has inaugurated a new tradition in Islam. Such a specific, organized mission sustained by offerings of the community and carefully directed and planned with personnel, literature, schools, and clinics indeed knows no parallel among Muslims. No barrier of color, race, language or nationality is permitted to stand in the way of selfless and tireless devotion to promote the unification of mankind through Islam.

#### THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN ISLAM - BACKGROUND

It is a universal fact that whenever spiritual darkness prevails over the earth and piety vanishes from the hearts of the people, God sends His messengers to guide people back to the right path of moral and spiritual glory and conversion to the creator. Holy scriptures of major religions are replete with signs where such messengers have appeared in the world and have established the kingdom of God.

For the Latter Days all these scriptures tell us that a spiritual guide would again come to re-establish the glory of God and rejuvenate their faiths. Jesus Christ would come for Christians, the Mahdi for Muslims, Buddha for the Buddhists and Krishna would come for the Hindus.

The signs and time given in all religious books have striking similarity in their essence. It was predicted by the Holy Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him, that at the advent of the Promised Messiah

and Mahdi:

(a) Muslims would be suffering from malaise, division, weakness and subjugation to other nations. They would neglect prayers, paying Zakat, be apathetic toward the Holy Quran, and deviate from Islamic law and values.

(b) A general decline in moral values would produce an increase in immorality and divorce. Women's dress would become flimsy and give maximum exposure. They would dress like men while men would wear cosmetics and dresses so as to look like women.

(c) A new kind of transport would replace camels. It would run with fire (in its stomach) and people would sit inside it. It would give out a noise to call the people. "Stones would start speaking" meaning that new sources of evidence of past history through our advancement of scientific research would be discovered in the future.

(d) Earthquakes, famines and epidemics would break out which would destroy large numbers of people.

(e) Solar and lunar eclipses would occur both together on specified dates in the same month of Ramadhan (Fasting).

(f) The Promised Messiah and Mahdi would appear in the beginning of the 14th century of Hijra.

The coming of such a person was no ordinary event. He appeared in 1835 in the small village of Qadian, India, in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. He claimed to be the Promised Messiah and the Mahdi on the basis of Divine revelation descended upon him. He claimed, in fact, that he fulfilled in his person prophecies of all the world faiths.

On March 23, 1889, he founded the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam and took into the fold its first converts. People started joining the Movement from all parts of the world. They now number more than 10 million, spread in 117 countries.

## **FREE YOURSELVES FROM RACIAL OR CASTE PREJUDICES**

Ahmadiyyat Teaches Universal Brotherhood

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II

*[A Friday Sermon of Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him). This sermon was delivered on April 19, 1935, at Qadian, India.]*

The real object of all prophets' missions is to do away with differences of race and colour. The Light given by them to the world is neither of the East, nor of the West, but of the heavens. We cannot attribute a fixed abode to Almighty God. He belongs neither to the East, nor to the West, to the North, nor to the South. He is the all-pervading Light of heaven and earth. This is the central pivot of all prophets' teachings. As long as it endures in a people they go on advancing towards success and power. When a people forget this teaching they develop dissensions among themselves and go down a declining path. Hearts only divide with the coming on of an idea of duality, with the idea of more than one thing existing side by side. But if there is neither East, nor West, and there is only Almighty God, who is the Light of the heavens and the earth pervading the East and the West, the North and the South, and in fact in all space throughout this universe of ours, how can questions of nationality or clan arise between man and man. In the time of the Holy Prophet of Arabia ideas of tribal superiority and differentiation of social status were at their high water mark. The Holy Prophet worked such a reformation, that it is being openly avowed today, that the untouchables can only be assimilated by the Muslims, in spite of the fact that Muslims have again adopted ideas of caste and feelings of racial pride from the Hindus and Christians.

### **ISLAM: A NEW BIRTH**

While Islam has done away with racial or tribal pride, there are men who are so much possessed by these prejudices that they would not willingly let them die out. Islam or Ahmadiyyat is the name of a



new birth. Every one who enters the fold of Islam or Ahmadiyyat annihilates his former self and is born over again in Islam. He abandons his ancestry and his kith and kin, and sacrificing everything takes a new lease of life. He is the offspring of Islam and all Muslims are to him as his brothers and sisters. Can you think of any difference between the children of the same parents? However much an Englishman may take pride in his nationality on account of the extent and power of the British Empire, it cannot be gainsaid that on accepting Islam he is expected to leave his national pride behind and to consider himself a brother of his fellow Muslims. A Brahmin embracing Islam is expected to consider himself only a Muslim. Similarly an Indian, an Afghan, a Chinese, Japanese, or a Russian, when he becomes a Muslim, he forgets his nationality. It does not mean that he is no longer a patriot, the Holy Prophet has said that patriotism is a part of the faith. Islam asks us to be particularly solicitous for our neighbours' good. If an Afghan, a Chinese or a Japanese works for the good of his people, he is only following the dictates of Islam provided he confines his enthusiasm to the removing of moral evils and to improving the depressed condition of his fellows. If he goes forward to make invidious distinctions on the ground of nationality between an Englishman and an Indian, a Japanese or a Chinese, he trespasses upon the limits placed by Islam upon the sentiment of race and tribe.

### SERVANTS OF ALLAH

God has given us the Light brought by the Holy Prophet of Arabia, through the Promised Messiah who requires us to be servants of God only, and not to give ourselves away to a racial or territorial sentiment which has been responsible for so much international rivalry. You cannot be a true Muslim as long as you nurse such a pride in your heart. The ideal of Islam is to establish a brotherhood in the world. You cannot reconcile racial or provincial pride with the idea of a universal brotherhood. This would be like serving two opposite ideals at the same time. Having been Ahmadis, if you are prey to such a self-contradictory sentiment, it means that you saw the Light, but instead of deriving any benefit out of it, you allowed it to scorch your eyes, as it is well known that brilliant light brightens as well as scorches things. Now therefore, as you from all parts of India are before me, (and people from Sumatra and Java too are always ordinarily among us), I ask you to let such distinctions die out from

among us. I have been led to say to you these things because of some recent happenings in which two provinces particularly, viz., Bengal and the Frontier have played a part. I do not think it fit to apportion blame between them, but I cannot help saying that Ahmadiyyat cannot make its home in a heart which is at the same time nursing a provincial sentiment. I have always tried to suppress this question whenever it has been pointedly raised before me. I can say for myself, (and God surely is aware of it) that I have never considered myself a Punjabi, and I have always thought that on accepting Islam one breaks through the bonds of caste or tribe and becomes a simple Muslim. When Ahmadiyyat spreads throughout the world it will surely end racial or tribal pride and do away with provincial jealousies. This is the great object for the realisation of which every honest Ahmadi is expected to put in his best efforts. If we fail to achieve this object it will surely mean that we committed unpardonable default in the discharge of our responsibilities.

#### SUCCESSION OF WAVES

Natural phenomena will tell you that in the case of an advancing people, every succeeding wave is stronger than the one before it. Do you not see how one hillock gives place to higher and higher hills till we come across very high mountains. A windstorm which carries away the rooftops of houses is only a gust of wind in the beginning. The alternation of hot and cold weather is also gradual, one warm day succeeding by a still warmer day, and one cold day followed by a still colder day, till there is the height of warm or cold weather. By the same law of nature Islam, rising as a first wave, was carried by Muslims to a point when the principle of brotherhood was established in the world. Now God has raised Ahmadiyyat as the second gust of wind, and it is our bounden duty that we should work to do away with what remains of the feeling of racial superiority. We should, therefore, be content to style ourselves Ahmadis, and should not emphasise provincial or racial differences by drawing distinctions between a Bengali and a Frontiersman. Had it been a natural sentiment, why should it not have been present in me. People from all parts of India, from far and near, come to me, but never for a second has there been in me any trace of the feeling of racial differences between them and myself. We only style a person a Bengali, a Punjabi or a *Sarhadi*, because it is sometimes necessary to point out the land from where he hails. Otherwise I do not see that as human beings a Bengali is

different from a Punjabi. I only notice Ahmadiyyat in every face.

### DIFFICULT TIMES AHEAD

I tell you that we are face to face with difficult times. As long as you do not change the courses of your lives, and do not take, as it were, a new birth, success cannot be yours. I sometimes wonder how great is the difference between the thoughts of one man and another. From the point of view from which I look upon the world, there is a hell of opposition raging through the world. The mischief-making of the Ahrars you will say? Surely not. It is the greater and more formidable opposition of evil and sin, to eradicate which the Promised Messiah came with a heavenly mission. The Ahrars have only cropped up today, but the Promised Messiah was sent by God many years ago to eradicate the evils of this world. I am at a loss to understand why our community is unable to notice these evils. We shall surely forget all our little racial differences, if every member of our community becomes aware of the extent and strength of those evils.

### LOVE AND HATRED

When a house is on fire, no one likes to quarrel for ordinary things. Many a time has it happened that mothers have trampled upon babies while trying to escape from a picture-hall on fire. When one is face to face with a calamity, petty distinctions based on love and hatred disappear. When all apparent distinctions vanish in the case of a cinema-hall or a dinner hall on fire, to wrangle over such small matters as a particular person being elected a president or an Amir, in face of the great hell-fire of opposing evils of the world, is so petty a thing that I do not like even to mention it. I then wonder whether we have not yet wrought in us the change which Ahmadiyyat intended to work among us? What has our Holy Founder given us? Not the riches of this world but one and only one thing, that is God.

### OLIVE OIL LAMP

The verses that I have recited in the beginning show that a Muslim's mind is illuminated by the oil of the olive tree, which is neither of the East nor of the West, meaning thereby that a man in whom burns the light of that oil cast asunder the bonds of racial superiority. But a person who is still subject to such racial prejudices

and is not free from a local sentiment can only be said not to have attained the Light which God wishes to kindle in a Muslim's breast. Eradicate these narrow ideas, and consider yourselves only Ahmadis--nay, Ibadullah or the servants of Allah, as we call ourselves Ahmadis only in contradistinction from the other people. In point of fact we are the servants of Allah, and as such we cannot be masters of anything, on the other hand everything belongs to God. The Quran is explicit on this point. It says that God has requisitioned your lives and your property. Lives comprise relations, friends, etc. and the other possessions come under property. Both these are taken away by God from you, why should you thus wrangle over this and that things belonging to this or that person, or indulge in petty quarrels on the election of a president or a secretary in the community?

### GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

We should all forget such insignificant things. There is a stupendous task before us. You know how difficult is it to mend the ways of an erring child. We have to reform countless men--men who are superior to us in wealth, power, honour and rank, men who have a hand in the administration and who wield an influence over the people. How great, under such circumstances, should be our effort. We should be mad with enthusiasm. In spite of this some of us are in a complacent mood as if they have conquered the world and have now nothing to do. I have said it many a time to you that there is no peace in store for you. If you want an abiding peace hereafter, you will have to sacrifice the comforts of this world. There is a heavy programme before us. The work is already in progress and only a few days' reports show that if all the Ahmadis devote themselves to this work we shall, in spite of the world, scale the highest peak of progress in a very short time. *Tabligh* reports from different places show that, as an enemy is throwing stones on Ahmadis, the former is all the time feeling a prick of conscience and is terror-stricken. He meets our men in private and tells them that he has been a fool to cause them harm. From among these very oppressors there come out those men who say that the Ahmadis are being highly tyrannised these days, oppression is not an ordinary affair. Extreme of love may be possible, but not an extreme of oppression.

## ABIDING HEAVEN

I notice that a great change is taking place although work has been started only in a few places. How long men will shut their eyes against the Great Light brought by the Promised Messiah? There will most certainly come a day when they will accept that Light. Taking an example from the acts of God we see that there can be an extreme of love for God but not of sin or spiritual blindness. That is why there is the promise of an abiding heaven, but there is no promise of an abiding hell as a punishment for spiritual blindness. The reward for love and mercy is unlimited but the punishment for oppression and tyranny is not unlimited. This only proves that we can carry love to an extreme but not oppression.

## THE NEW SCHEME

I have thought of a plan to extend the scope of the new scheme. The plan is this. On one Friday in every month, the sermon should only deal with the new scheme and while preparing the members of the community for greater sacrifices attempt should be made to foster in them a desire to do virtuous deeds and to live righteous lives. The different parts of the scheme should be dealt with one by one in different sermons. There is another plan. I propose that local communities should hold six-monthly meetings, at which speeches should be made on the different items of the scheme. I have fixed May 26, as the appropriate day for this object this year, as the death anniversary of the Promised Messiah will lead our men to discharge their responsibilities with greater enthusiasm. Speeches should be delivered on such topics as, for instance, the need of promoting love and amity between the members, the paying up of arrears of their contributions, the sending of children to Qadian for education and religious instruction, preparation of the community for money contributions next year. These items of the scheme have been printed and a chart too has been prepared, which you should hang in your rooms in order to keep it constantly before your eyes. The scheme also includes a proposal to the effect that men should deposit their savings in the Trust Fund. I have proposed such meetings, because some men understand a thing more readily from one of themselves. Some who do not read the newspapers of the community will thereby become aware of the scheme. If the sermon on one Friday in a month be devoted to the explaining and reminding of the items of the scheme, and indivi-

duals should devote their lives to *Tabligh*, with a persistence and perseverance, the evils, to eradicate which I have made this scheme, will be done away with very soon, and in six or seven months time a new order may possibly be ushered into the world.

#### PRAYER

I pray to God that He may reform the individuals of our community, and He may make them realise that every second that is being wasted, will entangle us in great difficulties and will be the cause of injuring Islam irreparably.

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"And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongue and colors. In that surely are Signs for those who possess knowledge."

*(The Holy Quran, 30:23)*

"O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may recognize one another. Verily, the most honorable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware."

*(The Holy Quran, 49:14)*

## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL CONDITION

Alexander Webb

*[Mr. Alexander Russell Webb (1846-1916), the first American Ahmadi Muslim, accepted Islam through correspondence with the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, and was most eager to spread the knowledge of Islam and its teachings in the United States. The following is his address to the Parliament of Religions at the World's Columbian Exposition, published in 1898.]*

One of the greatest mistakes the follower of any religion can make is to form and express a positive opinion of the moral effects of another religious system from the general conduct of those who profess to follow it, and at the same time to ignore the faults and weaknesses of those who are within the fold of his own faith. It is unfortunate, perhaps, that among the masses of believers, religious prejudice is so strong as to prevent the exercise of a calm and just discrimination in the examination of an opposing creed.

It would be neither just nor truthful to assert that every man who lives in an American city, town, or village is a Christian and represents in his acts and words the natural effects of Christian teachings. Nor is it fair to judge the Islamic system in a similar manner, and yet I regret to say that it is quite generally done in Europe and America. There are in Asia today many thousands of people who call themselves Mussulmans and yet who have a no more truthful conception of the character and teachings of Mohammed than they have of the habits of the man in the moon. If one or a dozen of these should commit an act of brutal intolerance or fanaticism would it be just to say that it was due to the meritable tendencies of their religion?

There are several reasons why Islam and the character of its followers are so little understood in Europe and America, and one of these is that when a man adopts, or says he adopts, Islam he becomes known as a Mussulman and his nationality becomes merged in his religion. As soon as a Hindu embraces Islam his character disappears.



If a Mohammedan, Turk, Egyptian, Syrian, or African, commits a crime the newspaper reports do not tell us that it was committed by a Turk, an Egyptian, a Syrian, or an African, but by a Mohammedan. If an Irishman, an Italian, a Spaniard, or a German commits a crime in the United States we do not say that it was committed by a Catholic, a Methodist, or a Baptist, nor even a Christian; we designate the man by his nationality. There are thousands of men in the prisons of our country whose religious belief, if they have any, is rarely or never referred to. We do not refer to them as Christians simply because their parents attended a Christian church, or they themselves had a church membership at some time in the remote past. But, just as soon as a native of the East is arrested for a crime or misdemeanor, he is registered as a representative of the religion his parents followed or which he has adopted.

We should only judge of the inherent tendencies of a religious system by observing carefully and without prejudice its general effects upon the character and habits of those who are intelligent enough to understand its basic principles, and who publicly profess to teach or follow it. If we find that their lives are clean and pure and full of love and charity, we may fairly say that their religion is good. If we find them given to hypocrisy, dishonesty, uncharitableness, and intolerance, we may safely infer that there is something wrong with the system they profess.

In forming our estimate of a religion we should also calmly analyze its fundamental and consider the racial and climatic influences that surround its followers, as well as their national habits and customs.

I take it that we all desire to know the truth, and that we are willing to have our attention called to the fact if we make a mistake in our estimate of our neighbor's religion. That was the sentiment that possessed me ten years ago, when I began the study of the Oriental religions, and I hope that it largely influences the minds of all who hear me today.

Another of the most potent reasons for the unfavorable opinion of Islam and its professed followers which prevails in America and Europe today is the disposition of the people of the West to judge the people of the East by our Western standard of civilization. We of the

We believe that our wonderful progress in the arts and sciences, and the perfection of those means by which our physical comfort and pleasure are secured, gives us just cause to feel superior to those who do not bask in the sunshine of our 19th century civilization. In a general way, and with some few exceptions, perhaps, we consider our social system admirable, and when we find that many Mohammedans, Buddhists, Hindus, and other Eastern people do not join with us in this opinion, we console ourselves with the belief that it is because they are heathens and incapable of recognizing and appreciating a good thing when they see it. It would, undoubtedly, surprise some of my hearers to know what many of the more intelligent Mussulmans and Hindus of India think of this civilization of ours of which we are so proud.

There is a class of Mussulmans and Hindus and Buddhists in the East, with whom the Western missionaries rarely come in contact, and when they do there is no discussion of religious doctrines, because these "heathens" have learned by experience that it is worse than a waste of time to argue over such matters; but generally they are men of profound learning, who speak English as fluently as they do the Oriental tongues, and who are well versed in all the known systems of religion and philosophy. It will probably surprise many people here to know that nearly all the more intelligent and highly educated Mussulmans of India are quite as well informed as to the history and doctrines of the other religious systems as they are concerning their own.

We Mussulmans firmly believe that the teachings of Moses, Abraham, Jesus, and Mohammed were substantially the same; that the followers of each truly inspired prophet have always corrupted and added, more or less, to the system he taught, and have drifted into materialistic forms and ceremonies; that the true spirit has often been sacrificed to what may, perhaps, be called the weak conceptions of fallible humanity.

### INFLUENCE OF ISLAM

In order to realize the influence of Islam upon social conditions, and to comprehend and appreciate the teachings of Mohammed, his whole life and apparent motives must be inspected and analyzed carefully and without prejudice. In view of the very unsatisfactory and contradictory nature of much that has been written in English

concerning him, we must learn to read between the lines of so-called history. When we have done this we will find that the ethics he taught are identical with those of every other prominent religious system. That is to say, he presented the very highest standard of morality, established a system of worship calculated to produce the best results among all classes of his followers, and made aspiration to God the paramount purpose of life.

Like every other truly inspired teacher, he showed that there were two aspects or divisions of the spiritual knowledge he had acquired--one for the masses who were so thoroughly occupied with the affairs of this world that they had only a very small portion of their time to devote to religion, and the other for those who were capable of comprehending the higher spiritual truths and realized that it was better to lay up treasures for the life to come than to enjoy the pleasures of this world. But his purpose, clearly, was to secure the most perfect moral results by methods applicable to all kinds and conditions of humanity.

In analyzing the hades or sayings of the Prophet, aside from the Koran, we should always bear in mind the social conditions prevalent among the Arabs at the time he taught, as well as the general character of the people. Presuming that Mohammed was truly inspired by the Supreme Spirit, it is quite reasonable to suppose that he used quite different methods of bringing the truth to the attention of the Arabs 1,200 years ago than he would follow before an audience of intelligent, educated people, such as sits before me, in this 19th century.

Before proceeding further I desire to explain that, in order to show clearly the influence of Islam upon social conditions, it will be necessary to make some comparisons between the habits and customs in Mussulman communities and in the cities and towns of Europe and America, where Christianity is the prevailing religion. In doing this I have no intention to reflect upon the latter nor give offense to any of its followers. My purpose is to show, as lucidly and distinctly as possible, a side of the Islamic faith, which is quite familiar to my fellow countrymen, and which is the life of the Moslem social fabric.

## ISLAM MISUNDERSTOOD

There are a number of objections to Islam raised by Western people which I would like to reply to fully, but the very limited time allotted to me prevents my doing so. I can only enter a general denial and trust to time and the earnest, honest efforts of some of those who hear me to prove the truth of what I say. Nearly, if not quite all, the objections I refer to have their birth and growth in ignorance of the vital principles of Islam.

The chief objection, and the first one generally made, is polygamy. It is quite generally believed that polygamy and the Purdah, or exclusion of females, is a part of the Islamic system. This is not true. There is only one verse in the Koran which can possibly be distorted into an excuse for polygamy, and that is, practically, a prohibition of it. Only the other day I read a communication in a church newspaper, written by a well-known clergyman, who said that the Koran required the Sultan of Turkey to take a new wife every year. There is no such requirement in the Koran, and what surprised me most was that such an intelligent, well-educated man as the writer should make that statement. I am charitable enough to admit that he made it through ignorance. I never met but two Mussulmans in my life who had more than one wife. There is nothing in the sayings of the Prophet, nor in the Koran, warranting or permitting the Purdah. During the life of the Prophet, and the early caliphates, the Arabian women went abroad freely, and, what is more, were honored, respected, and fully protected in the exercise of their rights and privileges.

Islam has been called "The religion of the sword," and there are thousands of good people in America and Europe who really believe that Mohammed went into battle with the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other. This is rather a singular charge for Christian writers to make; but they do make it and very inconsistently and unjustly, too.

The truth is that the Prophet never encouraged nor consented to the propagation of Islam by force and the Koran plainly forbids it. It says:

"Let there be no forcing in religion; the right way has been made clearly distinguishable from the wrong one. If the

Lord had pleased, all who are on the earth would have believed together; and wilt thou force men to be believers?"

And in the second surah, 258th verse, it says:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion. Now is the right way made distinct from error; whoever, therefore, denieth Yaghoot (literally error) and believeth in God hath taken hold on a strong handle that hath no flaw. And God is He who heareth, knoweth."

Our Prophet himself was as thoroughly non-aggressive and peace-loving as the typical Shaker, and, while he realized that a policy of perfect non-resistance would speedily have resulted in the murder of himself and every Mussulman in Arabia, he urged his followers to avoid, as far as possible, violent collisions with the unbelievers and not to fight unless it was necessary in order to protect their lives. It can be shown, too, that he never in his life participated in a battle and never had a sword in his hand for the purpose of killing or maiming a human being.

It has been charged that slavery is a part of the Islamic system in the face of the fact that Mohammed discouraged it, and the Koran forbids it, making the liberation of a slave one of the most meritorious acts a person can perform. But, in weighing the evidence bearing upon this subject, we should never lose sight of the social and political conditions prevalent in Arabia at the time the Prophet lived and the Koran was compiled.

### STATUS OF WOMEN

It has also been said that Mohammed and the Koran denied a soul to woman and ranked her with the animals. The Koran places her on a perfect and complete equality with man, and the Prophet's teachings often place her in a position superior to the males in some respects. Let me read you one passage from the Koran bearing upon the subject. It is the thirty-fifth verse of the thirty-third sura:

Truly the men who resign themselves to God (Moslems),  
And the women who resign themselves,

And the believing men,  
And the believing women,  
And the devout men,  
And the devout women,  
And the men of truth,  
And the women of truth,  
And the patient men,  
And the patient women,  
And the humble men,  
And the humble women,  
And the men who give alms,  
And the women who give alms,  
And the men who fast,  
And the women who fast,  
And the chaste men,  
And the chaste women,  
And the men and women who oft remember God,  
For them hath God prepared forgiveness and a rich recompense.

Could anything have been written to emphasize more forcibly the perfect equality of the sexes before God? The property rights which American women have enjoyed for only a few years have been enjoyed by Mohammedan women for 1,200 years; and today there is no class of women in the world whose rights are so completely protected as those of the Mussulman communities.

### ISLAM LEADS TO PURITY

And now, having endeavored to dispel some of the false ideas concerning Islam, which have been current in this country, let me show you briefly what it really is and what its natural effects are upon social conditions. Stated in the briefest manner possible, the Islamic system requires belief in the unity of God and in the inspiration of Mohammed. Its pillars of practice are physical and mental cleanliness, prayer, fasting, fraternity, alms-giving, and pilgrimage. There is nothing in it that tends to immorality, social degradation, nor fanaticism. On the contrary, it leads on to all that is purest and noblest in the human character; and any professed Mussulman who is unclean in his person or habits, or is cruel, untruthful, dishonest, irreverent, or fanatical, fails utterly to grasp the meaning of the religion he professes.

But there is something more in the system than the mere teaching of morality and personal purity. It is thoroughly practical, and the results, which are plainly apparent among the more intelligent Moslems, show how well the Prophet understood human nature. It will not produce the kind of civilization that we Americans seem to admire so much, but it will make a man sober, honest, and truthful, and will make him love his God with all his heart and all his mind, and his neighbor as himself.

Every Mussulman who has not become demoralized by contact with British civilization prays five times a day, not whenever he happens to feel like it, but at fixed periods. His prayer is not a servile, cringing petition for some material benefit, but a hymn of praise to the one incomprehensible, unknowable God, the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent ruler of the universe. He does not believe that by argument and entreaty he can sway the judgment and change the plans of God, but, with all the force of his soul, he tries to soar upward in spirit to where he can gain strength, to be pure and good and holy and worthy of the happiness of the future life. His purpose is to rise above the selfish pleasures of earth and strengthen his spirit wings for a lofty flight when he is at last released from the body.

Before every prayer he is required to wash his face, nostrils, mouth, hands, and feet, and he does it. During youth he acquires the habit of washing himself five times a day, and this habit clings to him through life and keeps him physically clean. He comes in touch with his religion five times a day in a manner which produces results proportionate to the intelligence and spiritual development of the man. His religion is not a thing apart from his daily life, to be put on once a week and thrown aside when it threatens to interfere with his business or pleasure. It is a fixed and inseparable part of his existence and exerts a direct and potent influence on his every thought and act. Is it to be wondered at that his idea of civilization differs from that of the West? That it is less active and progressive, less grand, and imposing, and dazzling, and noisy?

#### PRACTICAL RESULTS

I will confess that when I went to live among the intelligent Mussulmans I was astonished beyond measure at the social conditions I encountered. I had acquired the idea that prevailed generally in this



country and Europe, and was prepared to find the professed followers of Islam selfish, treacherous, untruthful, intolerant, sensual, and fanatical. I was very agreeably disappointed. I saw the practical results of Islam manifested in honesty, truthfulness, sobriety, tolerance, gentleness, and a degree of brotherly love that was a surprise to me. The evils that we Americans complain of in our social system--drunkenness, prostitution, marital infidelity, and cold selfishness--were almost entirely absent.

It is a significant fact that only Mussulmans who drink whisky and gamble are those who wear European clothing and imitate the appearance of the Englishmen. I have never seen a drunken Mussulman nor one who carried the odor of whisky or beer about with him. But I have heard that some of those who have become Anglicized and have broken away from the Moslem dress and customs actually do drink beer and whisky and smoke cigarettes.

I have been in mosques where from 500 to 3,000 Mussulmans were gathered to pray, and at the conclusion of the prayer I was hemmed in by a hundred of them who were eager to shake my hand and call me their brother. But I never detected those disagreeable odors which suggest the need of extended facilities for bathing. I have repeatedly called this fact to mind while riding in the elevated railways in New York, and in two or three public assemblages in London.

Prostitution and marital infidelity, with scandalous newspaper reports of divorce proceedings, are quite impossible in a Mussulman community where European influences have no foothold. A woman toiling over a washtub to support a drunken husband and several children, and a poor widow with her little ones turned into the streets for non-payment of rent are episodes that never occur where Islamic laws and customs prevail. Woman takes her place as man's honored and respected companion and helpmeet, and is the mistress of her home whenever she is disposed to occupy that position. Her rights are accorded to her freely.

It is true that she does not attend public balls and receptions, wearing a dress that some people might consider immodest, and waste her health and jeopardize her marital happiness in the enervating dance; nor does her husband do so. She does not go to the theater, the circus, the races, nor other public gatherings in search of amusement,

but finds her pleasure and recreation at home in the pure atmosphere of her husband's and children's love and the peaceful, refining occupations of domestic life. Both she and her husband, as well as their children, are taught and believe that it is better to retire at 9, just after the prayer of the day, and arise before daybreak and say the morning prayer just as the first rays of the sun are gilding the eastern horizon.

Another feature of the Islamic social life that has impressed me is the utter absence of practical joking, or what is popularly known as "guying." There is little or no sarcasm, bitter irony, cruel wit among the Mussulmans calculated to cause their fellows chagrin, shame, or annoyance, wounding the heart and breaking that bond of loving fraternity which should subsist between men. The almost universal disposition seems to be to cultivate unselfishness and patience, and place as little value as possible upon the things of this world.

In the household of the true Mussulman there is no vain show, no labored attempt to follow servilely the fashions, including furniture and ornaments, in vogue in London and Paris. Plainness and frugality are apparent everywhere, the idea being that it is far better to cultivate the spiritual side of our nature than to waste our time and money trying to keep up appearances that we hope will cause our neighbors to think that we have more money than we really have, and are more aesthetic in our tastes than we really are.

"But," someone may say, "what about the story that a Mussulman believes that he will go directly to Paradise if he dies while trying to kill a Christian?"

This is one of the numerous falsehoods invented by enemies of the truth to injure as peaceful and non-aggressive a class of people as the world has ever seen. A traveler who has visited nearly all the Mohammedan countries said to me last week: "I would rather be alone in the dark woods and miles away from a town with one hundred Mussulmans than to walk half a dozen blocks in the slums of an English or American city after dark."

He also told me that while he was on a steamer at Constantinople, he gave a Turkish boatman a lira, or about \$5 to buy him some fruit and cigarettes. The English passengers laughed at his credulity

and assured him that he would never see his lira again. But just as the anchor was being raised the boatman returned bringing with him the fruit and cigarettes and the exact change.

In April last a lady at the Deabrosses street ferry in New York gave her cloak to a young man to hold while she purchased her ticket. She has not seen him since.

### HOSPITALITY

A Mussulman, if he is hungry and has no lodging place, may walk into the house of a brother Mussulman and be sure of a cordial, hospitable welcome. He will be given a seat at the frugal meal and a place where he can spread his mat. One of the best of Islamic social customs is hospitality. Many Mussulmans are glad to have the opportunity to give a home and food to a poor brother, believing that God has thus favored them with the means of making themselves more worthy to inherit Paradise.

The greeting, "Asallam Aleikum" (Peace be with thee), and the response, "Aleikum Salaam" (With thee be peace), have a true fraternal sound in them, calculated to arouse the love and respect of anyone who hears them. In the slums of our American cities this summer there were hundreds of hungry, homeless people, while hundreds of houses in the fashionable streets were closed and empty and their owners were living luxuriously at summer resorts. Such a state of affairs would be impossible in a purely Mussulman community.

### A GRAND CIVILIZATION

I have seen it asserted that under the Islamic system a high state of civilization is impossible. Stanley Lane-Poole writes as follows:

For nearly eight centuries under her Mohammedan rulers Spain set to all Europe a shining example of a civilized and enlightened state. Her fertile provinces, rendered doubly prolific by the industry and engineering skill of her conquerors, bore fruit in a hundred-fold. Cities innumerable sprang up in the rich valleys of the Guadalquivir and Guadinan, whose names, and names only, still commemorate the vanquished glories of their past. Art, literature, and science prospered as they then prospered nowhere else in Europe. Students flocked from

France and Germany and England to drink from the fountains of learning which flowed only in the cities of the Moors. The surgeons and doctors of Andalusia were in the van of science; women were encouraged to devote themselves to serious study, and a lady doctor was not unknown among the people of Cordova. Mathematics, astronomy and botany, philosophy and jurisprudence were to be mastered in Spain and in Spain alone. The practical work of the field, the scientific methods of irrigation, the arts of fortification and ship-building, the highest and most elaborate products of the loom, the graver and the hammer, the potter's wheel and the mason's trowel were brought to perfection by Spanish lords. In the practice of war, no less than in the arts of peace, they long stood supreme. Whatsoever makes a kingdom great and prosperous, whatsoever tends to refinement and civilization was found in Moslem Spain.

And what has become of this grand civilization, traces of which we still see in some of the Spanish cities and the splendid architecture of the Mogul emperors of India? It is to be seen here in Chicago and in wherever there is a manifestation of materialistic progress and enlightenment.

So long as the pure teachings of the Prophet were followed the Moslem development was pure and healthy and much more stable and admirable than the gaudy materialism that finally developed and brought with it utter ruin. True civilization--a civilization based upon purity, virtue and fraternal love--is the kind of civilization that exists today among the better classes of Mussulmans, and brings with it a degree of contentment and happiness unknown amid the tumult of the Western social system.

The devout Mussulman, one who has arrived at the intelligent comprehension of the true teachings of the Prophet, lives in his religion and makes it the paramount principle of his existence. It is with him in all his goings and the comings during the day and he is never so completely occupied with his business or worldly affairs that he cannot turn his back upon them when the stated hour of prayer arrives and present his soul to God, His love, his sorrows, his hopes, his fears are all immersed in it--it is his last thought when he lies down to sleep at night and the first to enter his mind at dawn, when the voice of the muezzin sings out loudly and clearly from the minaret of the mosque, waking the soft echoes of the morn with its thrilling, solemn,

majestic monotones: "Come to prayer; prayer is better than sleep."

\* \* \* \* \*

"He has prescribed for you the religion which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have revealed to thee (Muhammad), and which We enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus, *saying* Remain steadfast in obedience, and be not divided therein."

*(The Holy Quran, 42:14)*

"This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favours upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion."

*(The Holy Quran, 5:4)*

## **IN THE MEMORY OF THE BELOVED**

### **Glimpses from the Life of the Promised Messiah**

**Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad**

*[This is an English rendering of a speech delivered by Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad at the annual Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community held in London in April 1985. It gives some glimpses of the life-style of Syedna Hazrat Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.]*

The Holy Quran says:

"As for those who say our Lord is Allah and remain steadfast, the angels descend on them reassuring them: fear not, nor grieve, and rejoice in the glad tidings of the gardens which you were promised."  
(31:41)

This verse of the Holy Quran mentions a distinctive trait of men of God, which is steadfastness in their mission in all events and circumstances. They possess extraordinary patience and courage, and invariably bring out new dimensions of moral standards. These qualities are especially granted to them by Almighty God.

More than once in his revelations, the Promised Messiah was told to be forbearing and steadfast even when odds exceeded the endurance of any ordinary human being. Allah said to him on various occasions:

- a. "Be steadfast as you have been commanded."
- b. "You must show utmost patience as was shown by great Prophets."
- c. "There is severe persecution ahead. So be patient in the manner of the exalted Prophets."
- d. "Be tolerant to the oppressor."

The above revelations (in Arabic) pertain to the early period of the Promised Messiah's ministry. This is merely a sampling. There are many other revelations which foretold extreme hardship ahead of him.

A careful review of the life of the Promised Messiah shows how he was faced with false law suits throughout his life. He was dragged into court on countless occasions on baseless pretexts. He cut his way through an unbearably strenuous period of history in the manner of the noble prophets of God. He never hesitated in his sacred mission, even though he was tested to the limit many times. All the machinations and evil designs of his enemies were foiled, sometimes even before they took shape, by the Divine Hand. He never appeared grim under duress, nor did his handsome face show any sign of displeasure or uneasiness. He constantly beamed with hope, trust and confidence, like a bright sunrise on a bleak winter morning.

The British Government, at the urging of his opponents, tried the Promised Messiah on false allegations. Consequently, in addition to the common man and staunch enemies, certain biased sections of the government machinery joined in his opposition. Thus, one who only wished to remain devoted to God all the time was constantly troubled and persecuted. He was physically assaulted. Social boycott was made. And his followers were persecuted in a wide variety of ways.

The continuous tyranny to which the Promised Messiah and his followers were subjected is a long story. Here is an excerpt from the writings of the Promised Messiah which gives a brief insight into a culture that had cut itself completely adrift from all moral and ethical mooring:

"You have no inkling of the burden of abuses that is hurled at me daily by my enemies. It is quite often that letters with filthy language are sent to me. Sometimes the abusive language is not even sealed. Quite a number of these letters are unstamped and we have to pay the postage. When we go through these letters there is nothing but dirty abuses. The contents are so vile and filthy I am certain none of the previous Prophets have been abused so nastily. Even Abu Jahl (the arch enemy of the Holy Prophet) could not have matched them in obscenity. But I bear it patiently as you must do too. The branch is



never heavier than the tree itself. This is a temporary phase. Abuses cannot endure indefinitely. The evil design of the mischievous cannot wear me down. Had I not been commissioned by God, my opponents would have withered me down with their abuse. But I know for certain that He has sent me. I, therefore, do not care in the least for what is said against me. They denounced me as a believer and leveled false accusations against me.

"Maulvi Muhammad Husain Batalvi has prepared a memorandum against me and it is attested by two or three hundred Maulvis from Peshawar to Benaras. This document sanctions the killing of Ahmadis and looting and abduction of their women folk. It further declares Ahmadis as heretics and, even worse, people who have gone astray and lead others from the right path. Ahmadis are alleged to be, in fact, worse than Jews and Christians in faith.

"I was pelted with stones at Amristar by the fanatical multitudes. The shabby treatment meted out to me at Sialkot was yet another instance of my enemies' wickedness. They tried their utmost that I should be given the sentence of death by hanging. In short they have made every possible effort to persecute me."

The followers of the Promised Messiah also suffered. A blanket indictment was proclaimed against all Ahmadis and a rein of terror and harassment was let loose which culminated to the fatal stoning of Sahibzada Abdul Latif Shaheed at Kabul. This was a heinous act unmatched in its brutality and viciousness.

### TOLERANCE AND COMPASSION

But God's chosen Messiah never abated or faltered the tempo of his Divine mission. In him, the world had truly rediscovered the mystery of forgiveness, mercy, reconciliation. He enjoined on his followers to bear all hardship with utmost courage and fortitude. On one occasion he said, "Look, I have been ordained to advise you to stay away from disorder and provocation. If evil insists on hurting you, either show humbleness or leave peacefully....I emphasize upon you again and again to show utmost patience at all times. The weapon of tolerance is far more effective than firing guns. It is forbearance

which eventually wins the hearts."

The Promised Messiah not only preached toleration and patience to others, but also showed exemplary personal restraint against bitter provocation on many occasions. It was during his first visit to Lahore at the start of his ministry in early 1892, that a Maulvi came to see him and took a seat right in front of him. Then he started hurling filthy abuses at the messenger of God. He continued abusing without pause until he was literally exhausted. The Promised Messiah who had so far listened to him silently, then uttered a single phrase: "Anything else?"

The Maulvi was visibly ashamed of his own conduct and walked away hurriedly. A Hindu dignitary who was present on this occasion remarked, "I had heard tales about the humbleness and modesty of Jesus of Nazareth. What I witnessed today not only proved the truth about Jesus, but also that Mirza Sahib (The Promised Messiah) is the epitome of forbearance exceeding that of Jesus."

Once, in 1934, during my posting as a missionary in Lahore, Mian Abdul Aziz Mughal (a member of a distinguished Ahmadi family of Lahore) narrated the following incident to me:

"Once I went to Qadian and, as was the custom, called first at the house of the Promised Messiah. He came out and said smilingly to me, 'Mian Abdul Aziz, we continue to receive letters full of abuses from our enemies, and we keep storing them in a bag. Today we weighed the bag--it was four maunds (150 kgs).'"

What a great verity the Promised Messiah has stated:

"Calling the fanatics to truth is no easy job. Everywhere there are poisonous snakes and paths that lead to places both desolate and hot." (couplet by Promised Messiah)

One day someone mentioned to Hazrat Aqdas that a certain Maulvi had used very foul language against his august person. On hearing this, Muhammad Abdullah, a companion of the Promised Messiah popularly known as 'professor' among the Ahmadis, exclaimed furiously, "Woe to him! I would have broken that Maulvi's head." The Promised Messiah admonished him mildly and said, "No,

no, not at all! Our teaching abhors violence. In such a case you should show humility and meekness."

Sheikh Yaqub Ali Irfani, a prominent companion of the Promised Messiah, mentioned that the Promised Messiah was in Lahore and one day was walking towards his residential quarters after offering Zuhr prayers in a local mosque. A man who was tall and extremely well built, suddenly appeared from nowhere and physically attacked the Promised Messiah. He grabbed his waist from behind and tried to lift him bodily with the apparent intention of throwing him to the ground. The Promised Messiah stumbled slightly with the impact, but in a fraction of a second he regained his balance. The assailant was unable to lift him even an inch from the ground. Some of the companions tried to manhandle the attacker, but the Promised Messiah intervened instantly and directed, "No one may beat or harm him. The man, simple as he is, believes that we have usurped his title of Mahdi." The assailant was later found to lay a claim to be the Promised Mahdi.

Sheikh Yaqub Ali further stated that the Promised Messiah showed such deep concern for the attacker that he entered his residence only after he was sure that the unfortunate person had walked away from the locality safely. This rare example of mercy and forgiveness was a daily occurrence of the Promised Messiah's lifetime. Hazur says in one of his compositions:

"I seek God's compassion for friends and foes;  
Our wrath is under wraps and our mercy overflows."

The Promised Messiah's forbearance and leniency towards his enemies had become widely known. The machinations and the conspiracies of his opponents were not only confined to foul verbal and written insults. More than once they tried to get him hanged. But the Messenger of God never lost his nerve and never showed any outward sign of the stress or strain to which he was so often exposed. The Christian high priest in the Punjab, Dr. Martin Clark, lodged a false complaint against the Promised Messiah in the court of the District Magistrate, Gurdaspur. The case was filed under the auspices of the India Penal Code pertaining to conspiracy to murder. The Christians, who are usually so adept at showing the olive branch to outsiders, joined hands with the Hindus and corrupt Maulvis to insure that the Promised Messiah was sent to death row to await public

hanging. But to the great chagrin and disappointment of the conspirators, the British Magistrate, himself a devout Christian, found him to be innocent and absolved him honorably of all charges.

Col. Douglas even went so far as to tell the Promised Messiah that he could sue Martin Clark for concocting a false case against him. The Promised Messiah, without hesitating for a moment, informed the judge that he had no such intention. His case was already pending in a Higher Court of Justice, the Heavens themselves.

### MAGNANIMITY AND GRACIOUSNESS

Not only did the Promised Messiah show patience and perseverance, but he also displayed magnanimity and graciousness in the face of opposition and difficulties.

Mirza Nizam Din and Mirza Imam Din were cousins of the Promised Messiah, but were his very bitter enemies. Once they erected a wall in the middle of a very narrow street leading towards Masjid Mubarak and thus effectively barred the passage of the pedestrians towards it. This became an unbearable hardship for the small, but growing, community. Legal proceedings had to be started to get the wall dismantled. The case dragged on for some time, but eventually the court gave verdict in favor of the Promised Messiah and ordered demolition of the wall with costs to be borne by the defenders. Mirza Imam Din and his group were unable to pay the costs and, therefore, their property was exposed to public auction. In extreme humility and penitence the erstwhile enemies wrote to the Promised Messiah requesting him to forego the recovery of the costs which they were unable to pay. The Promised Messiah immediately withdrew the claim and expressed his displeasure at the attorneys for demanding the costs without his prior knowledge and consent even though it was being done in compliance with the court orders.

### COURAGE

There are numerous examples of uncommon steadfastness and courage shown by the Promised Messiah in times of acute and difficult circumstances. The life he led was so eventful and spectacular that one can only select a few incidents by way of illustration of the miraculous nature of his life.

Maulvi Karam Din once brought a lawsuit against the Promised Messiah at Gurdaspur. The proceedings were unduly lengthy. The Hindu Magistrate was making it very difficult for the Promised Messiah by continuously extending the dates of the trial. In his own mind the Hindu magistrate was avenging Pandit Lekhram, a prominent Hindu leader who became the victim of his own doing in accordance with the prophecy of the Promised Messiah.

One day the magistrate asked Hazrat Ahmad in open court about one of his revelations: "Whoever tries to insult thee, will incur the wrath of God." The Promised Messiah affirmed that it was his revelation. The magistrate was taken aback momentarily, but then asked, "Would this apply even to me?" The Promised Messiah answered firmly but in a low voice: "It applies to everybody." The magistrate repeated his query twice for a firmer answer. It was then that the Chosen One of God raised his voice and looking directly into the eyes of the magistrate, said, "Yes, it applies equally to you too." On hearing these prophetic words the Hindu magistrate was visibly shaken and hastily changed the subject.

### FIRM FAITH

The Promised Messiah had boundless faith in Divine promises. Sometimes in 1897 a British Superintendent of Police came to Qadian with a large police contingent to search the household of the Promised Messiah. It was an uncommon event, as the British rule had recently been established in the Panjab and senior officers were rarely seen in outlying and remote and sensitive areas. Hazrat Mir Nasir Nawab (father-in-law of the Promised Messiah) ran inside with signs of great anxiety about the large police contingent which had arrived with the intention, he feared, of arresting the Promised Messiah because of the death of Pundit Lekh Ram which occurred in accordance with the Divine Prophecy made by him. The Promised Messiah was at that time engaged in writing *Nurul Quran*, one of his books in the Arabic language. He calmly raised his eyes, and with a smiling face, told Mir Sahib, "People wear gold and silver bracelets as tokens of their beloveds. It does not matter if I have to wear bracelets of steel (handcuffs) for the sake of God." After a brief pause, he added, "But this shall not be so. God has set certain limits beyond which he does not permit the enemies of His beloved to trespass." That is exactly the way it happened. Nothing incriminating was found anywhere. The

British magistrate accidentally struck his head against a window and blood started flowing profusely. In utter despair he abandoned the operation.

Another Hindu Magistrate, Chandu Lal of Gurdaspur, also witnessed a miracle. The magistrate was a fanatical Arya, determined to send the Promised Messiah to jail, even for a brief period. Hindus of Gurdaspur held a meeting at which Chandu Lal was present. The meeting impressed upon Chandu Lal that the Promised Messiah was now his prey and ought not be spared. The magistrate made a solemn pledge to abide by the wishes of the community. Hazrat Maulana Sarwer Shah Sahib, a prominent companion, related this story to the Promised Messiah. As he repeated the words referring to Hazrat Aqdas as a prey in the hands of the Magistrate, the Promised Messiah, who was reclining, sat up straight, and said: "Did he say so? I am certainly not a prey at his hands. I am the Lion of God! Let him try to put his hands upon me and then see what happens to him." As he spoke these words, his face was aglow and his eyes flashed like those of a lion.

Chandu Lal was soon involved in a disciplinary case himself and was demoted to the much lower rank of tehsildar. He could not send the Loved One of God to prison but was himself disgraced and humiliated. What a true remark has the Promised Messiah made in one of his couplets:

Provoke not the one that is the beloved of God  
Can a weak and famishing jackal grapple with the lions!

There is another incident about Chandu Lal. One day when there was a large crowd of spectators in the courtroom, the magistrate decided to hold the proceedings of the court in the open. At one stage the magistrate asked the Promised Messiah if he claimed the ability to show heavenly signs. The Promised Messiah answered in the affirmative and said that God had blessed him with many a heavenly sign. The magistrate remarked, "Can you show a miracle right now in this open court?" The Promised Messiah said, "Yes. Whatever heavenly sign you wish to see, I can show it right now, in this open court." The magistrate and all who were present were stunned and did not pursue the subject any further.

The firm and unshakable belief that the Promised Messiah had in his divine mission was manifest throughout his long life. As he has stated: even if not a single individual remains with me, and all go away leaving me alone and helpless, no fear shall ever assail me. For I know God is with me. I can never be defeated. Even if I am crushed to dust and subjected to extreme persecution, abuses and curses, the final victory shall still be mine. Nobody fully recognizes me except the One who is always with me. The efforts of my enemies will be futile and vain, and all their machinations will come to naught. Hearken! Defeat is not my nature and destiny. With the courage and faith endowed to me, even the mountains of opposition would be crumbled to dust. I disdain outside help. I was alone in the beginning and never desired company. Will my Lord now leave me in trouble? Never. Will he ever desert me? No, never. My enemies will be debased and put to shame. And God will bring victory to his servant in all areas. I am so close to Him that nothing can separate us." (Anwar ul Islam)

God had given the Promised Messiah a heart that would never tremble in the face of any adversity. In one of his couplets he says:

We have hardened ourselves against the venom of our foes.  
We possess a strong heart that can bear hardship and woes.

The rare qualities of utmost courage and faith were not confined only to his person. As a great leader and example, he passed these attributes on to his staunch followers. An outstanding follower of his was Hazrat Sahibzada Abdul Latif Shaheed, the martyr of Afghanistan. About him the Promised Messiah writes:

Maulvi Abdul Latif Shaheed was murdered by the stone-throwers. The fanatics threw stones at him for over an hour until he lay lifeless under the heap. He did not utter one word expressing his discomfort and pain. The Amir of Kabul personally approached him suggesting that he should renounce his faith. He urged him repeatedly and promised exceptional favors and rewards. But the Sahibzada rejected all the offers disdainfully and did not display the slightest fear over the destiny that awaited him. This was an uncommon example of steadfastness and firmness of faith that he has left behind as an example for the Community. (Malfuzat, vol. 10, p. 140)

## IN DEFENSE OF ISLAM

The unmatched struggle that the Promised Messiah waged in the defence of Islam and for which he spent his entire life, deserves to be highlighted in this presentation. He wrote more than 80 books, placed thousands of advertisements, and spoke extensively and at every opportunity. The work was performed under extremely unfavorable conditions, and often when he was suffering from serious physical ailments. He stopped writing in the defence of Islam only when he passed away from this world. Hazrat Nawab Mubarak Begum (May God be pleased with her), the elder daughter of the Promised Messiah and a renowned writer both in prose and poetry, states:

During his final visit to Lahore in May 1908 the Promised Messiah started writing a book called *Pegham-i-Sulah* (the Message of Peace). There had been repeated revelation about his impending death during this period, but he wanted to complete this book. Three or four days before he passed away, I saw a dream in which the Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to our house accompanied by a large number of his companions. He called me and said: "My dear child! Go and tell your father that we are waiting here for his company." I immediately ran upstairs where the Promised Messiah was writing *Pegham-i-Sulah* and told him: "Father! The Holy Prophet is waiting for you downstairs." Hazrat Aqdas raised his head and told his daughter, "My dear, go and tell the Holy Prophet that I will be with him in no time." He passed away after a few days.

The era of the Promised Messiah started with *Braheen-i-Ahmad* and ended with *Pegham-i-Sulah*, the universal message of peace for the non-Muslim world. The like of this era has not been witnessed in human history.

In brief, the noble Messiah and the chosen Mahdi of God, Hazrat Ahmad (peace on him) carried out with great steadfastness and perseverance the task assigned to him by Almighty Allah. The troubles and tribulations he had to go through in order to accomplish his task is evident from a study of every moment of his life. The moment he announced his claim to have been appointed by Allah for his mission, he faced unparalleled storm of hatred and enmity. But



the Chosen One of God was not disturbed or dismayed. Singing boldly the hymns of God's praise, he marched ever forward. His heart was filled with the certainty that he had indeed been sent by God. He was certain that as the Chosen One of God, he was always under His protection and care. He suffered every pain and smiled at every insult. With utmost courage and conviction he continued the mission that was assigned to him. Even his bitterest enemies admitted that he steadfastly carried out the mission which he had started. An Arya newspaper wrote:

Mirza Sahib adhered steadfastly to his mission up to the last breath. Despite the storm of opposition, he did not budge an inch. (Inder, Lahore)

A Christian writer says:

The moral courage which Mirza Sahib displayed in the face of the enmity and persecution from his opponents is very praiseworthy. (Mr. H. Walter)

A non-Ahmadi Muslim scholar writes:

Mirza Sahib cleared his way from the fire of opposition and criticism and then advanced to the pinnacle of success. (Curzon, Delhi)

The lofty courage and moral character of the Promised Messiah described above is no doubt a proof that he was the Chosen One and appointed by God and that he was always certain of the support and help of Him Who had sent him. Certainly, the plant that He placed in the earth cannot be uprooted by anybody. He writes:

O ye who run towards me with a dagger drawn in hatred  
and enmity  
Fear the Heavenly Gardener. I am a tree planted by Him.

Then reflect with how much certainty he writes:

From my head to toe, My Beloved is residing within me  
O ye who hate me, beware of attacking me.

**O Ahmadiyya Jama'at**

This is certainly an age of great agony and pain. All of you are facing tremendous difficulties. The materialists would lose all courage in the face of such tribulations.

But blessed are you, that you have to pass through these tribulations so that God Almighty may distinguish the true believers from the untrue. So that the righteous may be separated from the filthy. The Appointed One of God won the hearts by patience and perseverance and as a result we have grown from one to ten million. Similarly, if, in the period of his righteous and beloved Khalifa, Tahir, if we display the same perseverance and patience, I assure you that the enemy has nothing in store except failure, humiliation, and disappointment. The success will ultimately be yours. The paradise of ultimate victory and success will be granted to you in this very life. This is the degree of God; a decision made in heaven which is bound to find its fulfillment on earth.

And the last of our words is  
All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of All worlds.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I have been sent to restore Truth and Faith and restore the love and fear of God in the hearts of men. This alone is the object of my existence."

*Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad*

*The Promised Messiah and the Mahdi (peace be on him)*

## **FINAL VICTORY OF ISLAM**

*[The following is an English rendering of an Urdu poem by the Promised Messiah, may peace be on him.]*

O' my Allah, the master of the universe, the concealer of our shortcomings. My dearest benefactor and provider. How can I thank thee for what thou has bestowed upon me. Words simply fail to describe it.

O' my Allah, I sacrifice before thee my body, my life, and my soul for I do not see anyone else who would love me so much. The sun has risen over our enemies while darkness has befallen on us at this time. Let the sun of thy blessings come out so my anxiety may be satisfied.

O' my dear Allah, may every limb of my body sacrifice before thee. Turn the reigns of this world towards me. Investigate the commotion in thy neighborhood, for failure to help like a friend would be too embarrassing. Treat my wounds with the ointment of thy blessings and listen to my cries of agony.

I cannot bear watching the decline of the religion of Muhammad, please help me emerge victorious in the battle. O' my Allah, shower thy blessings over Islam and save it. For this is at the moment like a capsized boat with its crew in agony.

A people are dying of thirst without water, turn the course of a stream in this direction. O' my Allah, we are weak, lift us with thy own hands and take us in thy own care. My nation is currently passing through the darkness of illiteracy but it is not difficult for thee that they become righteous.

O' my Allah, may every bit of my body and soul sacrifice before thee. Show me the day of prosperity and final victory of Islam. It is useless to seek help from humans at this time. Now, O' my Allah, we have no choice but to take appeal in thy blessed court.

## **AHMADIYYAT: THE REJUVENATION OF ISLAM**

Mubasher Ahmad

Before discussing how Islam is being rejuvenated through Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, it seems appropriate to ask a simple but necessary question: What is Islam? When asked by someone who is not a Muslim, this question may seem to have more than one answer. Today, there are almost one billion Muslims who adhere to different sects within Islam, and they are divided in diverse ethnic, linguistic, geographic and political groups. The variety of the answers sometimes causes a profound confusion in the mind of a Westerner who receives through the news media self-contradictory information. For example, at times he is told that Iran is going through an "Islamic Revolution" which is being "exported" to neighboring Islamic countries. He is further told that Muslim Mujahideen are engaged in a successful guerilla warfare, with the help of Americans, against the communist Russians in Afghanistan; while Islamic Fundamentalists are holding American hostages in Lebanon. And within Lebanon, there are Shiite Anmal, Jihad al-Islam, Islamic Hizb Aallah, Al-Jameeat al-Islamiyya and PLO fighting among themselves.

On the political scenes of "Islamic States," this confusion is transformed at times into utter frustration. Prolonged oppression, fanaticism, hypocrisy, back-stabbing, and terrorism are projected in the name of Islam. He is told that "Islam" has a unique political ideology, but then there are Dictators, Monarchs, Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Mullahs running their governments in "experimentation" with Islam. Again, within each Islamic country, there are countless Islamic societies. Only in Egypt, for example, there are Akhwan-ul-Muslameen, Jamaat-e-Islamiyya, Jamiyyat-e-Shariyya, Jamaat-e-Tabligh, Jamaatut Takfeer, Janood-ul-Allah, Munzamaat-uj-Jahad, Munzamaat-ul-Harir-ul-Islami, Takfir-wal-Hijra, and so on and so forth.

This list does not claim at all to be exhaustive. The total number of such societies, organizations and sectarian factions within Islamic countries run into thousands without any exaggeration. Now, to have divisions and diversification can at times be understood. But the

problem which a modern day average Western observer faces, while trying to comprehend Islam, is that most of these groups and societies reject and denounce each other as unbelievers and non-Muslims; and if given a chance, they will not hesitate to destroy and eradicate each other through a bloodbath. "Hatred for all and love for none" seems to be their governing motto. Yet he is told that Islam is a religion of tolerance, mercy and compassion. Then, the concept of Islam changes with each coup conspired by either secular men of arms or by religious men of knowledge. And the religion of Islam is mixed in the local politics to justify the changing socio-political circumstances. Islam is twisted, reshaped, disfigured, redone or undone with the rise and fall of dictators, kings, ayatullahs, prime ministers, colonels or generals.

The complexity, confusion and frustration do not cease here. After looking at various blurred and dismal images of Islam, the difficulty increases when the process of "rejuvenation" of Islam is brought into focus. Not only there are so many forms and faces of Islam, there is no dearth in the claimants of reviving forces within Islam. The concept of Islam's revival is being fervently expressed for the last decade through western news-media in a barrage of terminology.

### SOME SPECIAL FEATURES

It will be, therefore, imperative to point out the special features of Ahmadiyyat which make it distinct and outstanding in its claim and process of rejuvenation of Islam. These will be, of course, only a few selective features, which should not be considered anything but brief pointers.

First and most important of all is the fact that Ahmadiyya Movement, i.e. "Silsila Ahmadiyya," is founded through the revelation of God Almighty Himself, and it is not a mere man-made effort to revive the religion of Islam. The foundation of Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya is laid deep and firm in the prophecies of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Mohammad Mustafa (peace and blessings of God be on him). He predicted, first, the decline and the chaotic condition of Muslims, and this prophecy has come to pass. Then he foretold the divine remedy, the true and workable solution by Allah Himself--for Revival of the Faith and establishment of Shariah: A new world-order, through the Promised Messiah, the expected Mahdi (peace be on him) who

was to be appointed by God. That is, he was to be commissioned by Allah Ta'ala Himself. The Holy Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Mohammad Mustafa (peace be on him) predicted the exact time, and gave full elaboration of all the signs of the Earth as well as of the Heavens--to identify the Promised One. And the time and all the signs have also come to pass.

At exact time, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian claimed to be the Promised Messiah, the expected Mahdi, an Ummati Nabi on the authority of revelation that he received from Allah Ta'ala. He was commanded by God to lay the foundation of Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement. To obey the revealed directives from God, he invited people to enter into a covenant of spiritual allegiance to him.

On December 1st, 1888, he announced:

"I have to convey here another message to the people in general, and to my brother Muslims in particular, which is that **I have been commanded to take Bai'at of those who are seekers after truth** so that they may know what true faith and real righteousness are. They should give up indolence, faithlessness and all manners of iniquity, so that they may find the way that leads to the fountain of Divine Love. Those who feel prepared for this, should come to me so that I may befriend them and try to lighten their burden. God will bless them through my attention and prayer, provided they are fully prepared to carry out Divine instructions. This is a Divine command and I am hereby, today, conveying it to all."

Then he wrote down the Arabic text of the revelation, its translation is as follows:

"When you have made up your mind, you must trust in God. Make an ark under Our eyes, and under Our command. Those who take Bai'at at your hands will really be giving their hands into the Hand of God. The Hand of God is over their hands." (Sabz Ishtehar, p. 24)

On January 12, 1889, he announced the ten conditions of Bai'at-initiation into the Movement: These ten conditions draw a brief but the most attractive, clear and most genuine picture of true Islam. If someone needs an answer to the question: What is Islam?, and wants all the confusion to be removed, and wants to know Islam which is

pledged to be lived by Ahmadi Muslims, then these ten conditions of Bai'at provide the answer. The beauty of this answer is that not only it tells what Islam is, it also tells what is being implemented. May I suggest, therefore, that instead of keeping the ten conditions of Bai'at at the back-burners of our priorities in life, and instead of keeping them on the shelves or hanging on the walls or keeping them safe under lock and key in boxes, let us get them out and show to the world our Magna Carta. Instead of being hesitant to show it to others, let us make a point to let every person read them; and more importantly, see them being practised in our lives. We should have those conditions of Bai'at as our hallmark, as our identification, as a badge which we should be proud to let everyone see without an asking. Our daily life should be a living example, fully demonstrated to each and all who want to know what Islam is.

On the 4th of March, 1889, at Ludhiana, the Founder of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani, the Promised Messiah, the expected Mahdi (peace be on him) announced again:

"God desires to found a community of the faithful to manifest His glory and power. He will make the community grow and prosper, to establish the love of God, righteousness, purity, piety, peace and goodwill among men. This shall be a group of people devoted to God. He shall strengthen them with His own spirit and bless them and purify them. He shall multiply them exceedingly as He has promised. Thousands of Truthful people shall join His ranks. He shall Himself look after them and shall make the Community grow, so much so that its numbers and progress shall amaze the world. The community shall be a lighthouse so high as to illumine the four corners of the world. The members thereof shall serve as models of Islamic blessings. My true followers shall excel every other people. There shall always rise among them till the Judgment Day personages who will be the chosen ones of God in every respect. So has the Almighty decreed. He does as He wills."

#### DAWN OF A NEW ERA

On March 23, 1889, when the most obedient and loyal hand of Al-Haj Hazrat Maulvi Nooruddin grasped the hand of the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) and slowly but solemnly repeated the words

of the pledge, at that blessed moment, in the town of Ludhiana, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community took its formal birth. The lamp of Nooruddin caught its flame on the hands of a man who was in complete servitude to Hazrat Mohammad Mustafa, Ahmad Mujtaba (peace and blessings of God be on him) and in complete submission to God Almighty. And that light of faith, like an electronic blast, brightened up the environ to purify the hearts, to discard the sins, and to love God and to love mankind. Many others who were anxiously waiting their turn, rushed to light the lamp of their hearts. Each touch of hand, each solemn promise, each heart-beat, started dispelling the darkness which had overwhelmed Muslim life, conduct, thought and belief for centuries. The dust and the rust heaped on the mirror of Islam started to be washed off, and once again its shine and brilliance was ready to reach the corners of the earth. Thus, through the change of hearts, through the cleansing of souls, through a revolution from within, through the most solemn pledge made by men in the presence of God Almighty under the commandment of God Almighty, the rejuvenation of Islam started.

Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya knows and practises only one Islam--the same Islam which was the faith and practice of Hazrat Mohammad Mustafa (peace be upon him). Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya believes and practises the same Islam which was the faith and life of Muslims in the streets of Mecca, in the desert of Arabia, under the severest persecution which grew in its savagery with the grown efforts of Hazrat Mohammad Mustafa (peace be on him) to give the message. The oppressors and false accusers failed the first time to arrest the growth of the message of God. In the same way, tyranny and contempt against Ahmadiyyat has always been frustrated, and shall ever remain frustrated. Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya conveys the same message of Islam, which was conveyed by the Holy Prophet Mohammad (peace be on him) under the rain of rocks and shower of abuses of the vulgars and vagabonds in the town of Taif. Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya is reviving the same Islam, which was kept alive in the chest of Hazrat Bilal under the crushing weight of burning slabs; and Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya repeats the same Kalima in the same manner, which was declared by Hazrat Bilal with his parched lips and dried up tongue declaring the Unity of God: He is One, He is One, and declaring the prophet Mohammad Mustafa as the Prophet of God.



is declaring and reviving Islam, not as a mere lip-service as millions of Muslims do, but it is to be tested and tried under the crushing weight of oppression, under the demanding sacrifices of life, honour, property and children. Who else on the entire surface of the earth, is paying today this price of life, honour, property and children to declare Kalima Tayyiba? From east to west, from north to south, throughout the entire globe, today, every Muslim is free to recite this Kalima without being persecuted--without being tested, without being put on trial. But it is only Ahmadis in Pakistan, who are thrown into jail, disgraced, stripped and whipped, plundered and killed when they announce the same blissful words. This should speak volumes to recognise who is the right group who is true in its claim to rejuvenate Islam in action. If Islam is Kalima Tayyaba, then Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has proven without a shadow of a doubt that it has revived Islam by laying down their lives to uphold its truth and dignity.

Similarly, all human values which were established by the Holy Quran and practised by the Holy Prophet Mohammad Mustafa (peace be on him), and which were adopted by his companions who transformed the society, are now once again being recaptured by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

In this day and age of stark materialism, to establish a living relation with God to the extent that He converses with man as a friend, this distinct feature of Islam is fully revived through the pious and saintly personages among Ahmadis.

To render selfless service to suffering humanity by making incredible personal sacrifices, this distinct feature of Islam is revived through a well-organized effort of Ahmadiyya community.

To unite mankind in harmony and concord, to cross the barriers of race, color, nation and language are once again being established on a universal level through Ahmadiyyat. Asians, Africans, Europeans, and American Ahmadis are all at one level in a bondage of brotherhood and mutual respect for each other as if they were members of the same family.

#### KHILAFAT REINSTATED

The institution of Khilafat was the hallmark of Islam to

safeguard and to continue the blessings of prophethood, i.e. presenting the signs of Allah, teaching of the Book and Wisdom and cleansing of the souls, after the demise of the prophet. Once again, throughout the world, it is only and only Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya which upholds the cause of Khilafat. And to protect the institution of Khilafat, each and every Ahmadi, man or woman, is pledged to make every conceivable sacrifice.

At the end, I would like to submit with due respect that fulfilment of the dream to rejuvenate Islam through Ahmadiyyat in this age is a promise of Allah Ta'ala, made to the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be on him), and reassured by the Promised Messiah, the Mahdi (peace be on him). But we should not take it for granted that this will happen through us regardless what our personal response is to these heavy responsibilities. It is the infallible law of God that He does not bring any change in a people who do not respond to a call by bringing a change in their own attitude.

### OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

To have a tall claim but to fail in minor and common responsibilities may take this blessed opportunity away from us. It is high time to calmly and seriously put ourselves on rigorous standards of self-analysis and self-criticism. Our habits, our attitude, our daily dealings should reflect the truth of our claim and we should be worthy of this noble heritage which was initiated on 23rd March 1889. We should listen very carefully to our beloved Imam, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV, who is making us ready to enter the new century.

Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya is a collective name for each one of us. We are Ahmadis and Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya is us.

May Allah Ta'ala help us to realize our own personal situation. May Allah make us His instrument to fulfill His promises.

May Allah Ta'ala help us to translate in practice the ten conditions of Bai'at. May Allah make each and every one of us a bearer of that light which was lit in the heart of Nooruddin at the hand of the most devoted slave of Hazrat Mohammad Mustafa (on whom be peace) in complete submission to the will of Allah. Amen.

## **CONFESSIONAL THEOLOGY: THE WAY TO DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM**

Dr. George N. Malek

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The Christian West has traditionally seen Islam through Dante's eye: "The Inferno." Dante placed Muslim philosophers alongside Greek ones in the moderate punishment quarters of Hell. But to Muhammed, the Muslim prophet, he assigned the ninth of the tenth ditches in Hell, leaving the heart of Hell--the tenth ditch--to Satan himself. But it was upon Muhammed that the most sadistic punishment was to be inflicted, not Satan. Dante, as Christian history shows, advocated a more fierce struggle against Islam than against the "Christian" devil himself. Dante, then, and we, now, in the West, saw Islam not as a religion, but a life of licentiousness; Muslims, it was thought, were allowed the enjoyment of this (sexual) life as well as the joy, too, of the next life (heaven).

It is in this context that Islam is still viewed by European attitudes, subversed by American (mis)concepts, to be a heresy derived from Christian teachings, borrowed by Muhammed from the Monk Bahira. In the West, Muhammed's religious success is seldom ascribed to his divine revelation; it is more so to his approval of "licentious living." And even the translation of the Qura-an in 1143 AD by the English scholar, Robert Keffon, instead of clearing some of this bizarre thought, was used, instead, to rectify (our) hostility towards Islam. Accordingly, for much of the past history, and up to the middle of the twentieth century, we, in the West, regarded Islam as a menace. But today Christians are challenged by Islam as a religion that also

acknowledges the one true God; in fact, the same (Christian) God, Creator of the Universe. But Islam distinguished itself by its denial of the Christian doctrine of the trinity. In any case, Islam stands now, finally, acknowledged as a valid religion by Christians; in fact, Islam today challenges Christianity itself as a valid religion for the coming centuries.

But it is of interest that the center of gravity of this hostile attitude towards Islam, by the West, did not spring from the historical political struggle, but from the religious one. It was the Christian religious writings directed against Islam that were to make the lasting influence in the mind of the Christian West. Even though this hostility did not have its origin in medieval religious thought, it was the great mass of the medieval polemics, however, that continued to be deployed throughout the Renaissance and the Reformation, all the way throughout the eighteenth century, that made its religious barment of Islam, keeping it from being accepted as a valid religion until the present day. Unfortunately, the Renaissance's historical scholarship did not aid the matter; it merely repeated medieval accusations. Today, Muhammed is still thought, by many, as a false prophet--a magician, whose heresy had been spread by violence and the promise of divine approval for sexual indulgence.

Hence, Western thought today, and its historical recordings of Islam, are marked by provincialism; they accord, at best, a meager and grudging acknowledgment of Islam's vast history, which was maintained for longer time and over more extensive geography, even more than the Roman Empire itself. The core of the problem in religious dialogue, therefore, is that Western Christian thought assigns to Islam a validity (or invalidity) not due to Islam's religion, but to Islam's territorial conquest. That is, whenever Islam is thought of by Western scholars, their minds shift to a geographical mentality and they assign the "inferior" role to Islam as a religion. They forget that Christianity and Islam have a common origin. Western thought and philosophical speculations, therefore, are often the inheritors of colonial mentality and its hostility that "looked down" upon Arab mentality and culture. This hostility that is often reflected in scholarly bias about Islam, can be seen disguised in political pluralities and influences, both in territorial occupation and/or divisions. But this hostility, in its essence, is not a political one; it was, and continues to be, a religious one, which is of a comparative mentality in religion(s). Today, it is mandated

upon us to diagnose whether religious dialogues do indeed aim, in their motives, to acceptance of peoples, or are they simply other means by which colonial mentality is back into play. That is, do scholars of the Christian and Western thought dialogue Islam as an "equal" religion to Christianity? This is of utmost importance, because to subject a people territorially is to still allow them the struggle of the sword for liberation. But to subjugate people religiously is potentially deadly--to both sides. This is of particular impact as one learns (from history) that "religion" can be the most effective way to rule man as well as his civilization.

Western Christian scholars need to know, therefore, and quickly, that they should not forget, nor deny, that the origin of Christianity is not a Euro-medieval or a Romish one; the origin of Christianity is the same lands from which Islam, too, comes. The conflict does not stem, therefore, from geography, but from our concepts, in the West, that "religion is race." So much so has Western thought assigned Christianity to European culture that they care little today about what happens to Christianity in the Middle East--Christianity's birthplace--except, maybe, as a place of tourism, not of (Christian) faith. Western scholars write of their religion (Christianity) both objectively and without a personal identification. Islamic scholars cannot and do not. The West does not invest its soul in religion, but in race and economics. Islam cannot do that. To Islam, both race and geography are for religion (to descend). To Western scholars, it is in reverse: religion is for man, not man for religion. Unlike Islam, therefore, Western scholars value a religious orientation by who adopts it; Islam values a race by the effect (its) religion has on it.

To begin with, therefore, we can say that Islam, in religious dialogues, see themselves as oriented to religion, but see Western scholars as politico-culturally oriented. That is, Islam continues to distrust Western motives for religious dialogues precisely because they see (our) religion as neither primary nor effective in our culture. To illustrate this, let us examine two Islamic religious doctrines: the doctrine of death and the doctrine of God. Both doctrines are similar to those of Christianity. However, in the case of Christianity our society is seen, by Muslims, not to be abiding by (our) religious mandates and customs. And when we Christians do, our religion and religious customs are not binding to (our) faith or culture.

## THE DOCTRINE OF DEATH

When a Muslim nears death, he is encouraged, on his bed, to say the confession of (his) faith: "God is chief, universally encompassing." (The translation of "God is great" is poor and misleading.) These are the first words a Muslim hears, also, when he is delivered from the womb, at birth; these are the words whispered in his ears by the midwife. In Christian religious customs, there is nothing similar to this, unless one wants to make a case here for infant baptism. But Christians do not baptize infants upon their arrival from the womb, and the word of God is not preached to them at death. Islam does both. Islam mandates that its faith be preached to the newborn and confessed at (near) death. I recall, when in Lebanon, a Lebanese Druze Muslim, who was "converted" to Christianity by evangelical fundamentalist missionaries. He had much to gain materially by this "conversion." But at his death bed, he denied the Christian faith, said his last Muslim confession, and thus died a Muslim!

After death, the body is immediately washed, shrouded, carried to a mosque where service of burial is said, after which the bier is quickly borne to the grave. And all this is in obedience to the prophet who said that it was a good thing that the righteous should arrive soon to "happiness." The body is buried facing Mecca with the words: "We commit thee to the earth in the name of God and in the religion of the prophet"; and: "From it we created you, and unto it we shall return you, and from it raise you a second time." (Qura-an 20:55)

Here one can see that while Islamic theological doctrines are similar to those of Christianity in their belief of life (in faith), death (in faith), and the resurrection, their theological doctrines are the practice and mandates of life. This is not so, necessarily, in Christianity. This is why when Muslim scholars dialogue with Christians, they (Muslims) find it difficult to trust the Christian motive for dialogue; they sense a basic contradiction between word and deed. And, of course, any astute scholar can depict this double-bind factor in the theological thinking of the West in relation to its way of life. And double-bind factors have been ascribed, in the field of mental illness, to be a cause for schizophrenia: double message giving. Our culture in the West has been described, by our own critics, as a schizophrenic culture. Islam sees this in us, and has no intention of becoming involved with our religious schizophrenia--or is it a schizophrenic

religiosity? To Islam it is not Christianity but Christians that are not real. The Qura-an accepts the Christian faith, whereas we have nothing of this sort of acceptance towards them. We misconstrue ourselves as having the superior religion. In reality, it is a deficiency in our perception that God is only here and not there.

### THE DOCTRINE OF BELIEF AND PRACTICE

This brings up a most basic philosophical principle upon which Christianity is based: that of the paradox. Christianity attempts to deal, in its most basic doctrinal statements, with the nature of the paradox. Islam sees life as a continuum. Islam's tenets and propositions cannot be contrary to implied opinions; statements and/or religious sentiments that are seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense, yet are, in fact, true, throw Islamic mentality off balance and are not acceptable to them. They have not developed lines of thinking as those of the Christian gospel that sees religion as trying to satisfy man by essentially making him dissatisfied. In this (Islamic) philosophical mental disposition is a most dangerous element in dialogic arenas. Christians need to be aware that Islam does not tolerate contradictions. Their mental reaction becomes one of attempts of opposition and elimination. But we need also to know that we are not too different in the Christian West when it comes to the economic and the social life where elimination and opposition are the rule. Unlike Islam, therefore, the West welcomes the multiplicity of (religious) opinions and religions. To Islam this is the mark of unfaith itself. Islam has not been able yet to mentally look into a religion without (necessarily) adopting it as faith in which to believe. Islam always, therefore, is standing out of other religions. Their (under)-standing is only in Islam, not under any other religion. To Islam, to understand a religion is to be within that religion--subject and subjected to it. This is psychologically correct. Psychological under-standing is possible only from within a structure of knowledge, never from without that structure. One is unable to understand a statement (of belief) unless one believes in that statement. But psychological understanding is to be distinguished from religious and spiritual standings and understandings; the latter requires the inner experience with the meaning of the paradox. Islam, because it has not developed an adequate philosophy to deal with the paradox, continues therefore to be frustrated by religious dialogues as we know these dialogues to be--an exchange of knowledge, not faith. Islam reacts to paradox by

becoming "dizzy." Their understanding of the Christian faith is still psychologic. On the other hand, Christians deal conceptually with the paradox, but deny it in their practice of life. And unless Christians are able, in front of Islam, to produce witness, not argument, Islam will continue to stand unconvinced. On the other hand, unless Islam is able, from its Holy writings, to find avenues in their minds to the nature of paradox, they will continue to have a stand-offish attitude towards Christians, and towards participation in dialogues.

While the above seems to picture an impassable road (of theology and philosophy) between the two minds, it is my opinion that the passable roads are the roads that use direct contact with Islam, and that these will be the ones to bring understandings between Christianity and Islam. The Thanksgiving Square of Dallas experienced that, and found that it was the human encounter in the midst of dialogues (not theological speculations) that caused understandings to rise, as was elicited from Dr. El Najaar, former president of El Azhar University, when he said that even what seems evil comes from God, and is used by God for (our) good. Statements of this sort, that dialogue the nature of the paradox, do not come from theological debates with Islam, but from (ex)changes of minds and extensions of hands. The necessity for dialogue with Islam, therefore, is because there is no systematic exposition in the Qura-an of a differentiation between that which Muslims (should) do and that which they should believe. Taken as a whole, the Qura-an constitutes a body of mandates of duties man must do. That is, to Islam, belief comes from the practices of faith. Christianity reverses it: man is saved by faith, not works. To Islam, there is no conceptual differentiation between faith and works. Better yet, faith is never conceived until it is evident works. Christian scholars find this difficult to deal with because they are more oriented to abstract philosophy in their theological expositions and not to concrete living, as Islam does. This can be most observed in the Five Pillars of Islam: 1) the observance of the Creed (demanding a belief in God, his angels, his books, his prophets, and the last day in which man will be judged); 2) the performance of prayer; 3) the giving of alms; 4) the observance of fasting; 5) the performance of pilgrimage. All five mandates are mandates of performances from which belief arises. Even in the first pillar, it is the observance of the belief that is the pillar of belief in God, not the belief itself. The point Christian scholars must understand, therefore, is that Christianity should start, in dialoguing with Islam, from the point of Christian practice (as



witness to Islam) and not from their abstract theology. Islam can never be convinced of the other way around. This was proven by how Christianity, in the face of Islam, has largely eroded--first in the Middle East, and now in other parts of the world.

### GOD AND THE CREED

In Christian theology, a belief in God can stand upon philosophical and/or other expositional means and that are, in turn, not necessarily dependent upon or derived from inspired book(s)--the Scriptures, or other writings. To Islam, this is offensive and is (psychologically) splitting. Man is not in a (supreme) position to be able to believe without concrete evidence of God: "Oh you who believe, believe in God and his messenger and the book which has revealed to his messenger and the book (possibly the Christian and Jewish scriptures) he revealed before. And whoever disbelieves in God and his angels and his books (notice the plural inclusion of other faiths) and his messengers and the last day, he indeed strays far away." (Qura-an 4:136)

Three basic concepts to which a dialoguing Christian must adhere are:

1) Christians, to Islam, are not strayers because they are strayers from Islam, but are strayers because they stray from their own (Christian) book. This is based, as earlier said, on the fact that a Christian theologian can ascribe to (a) belief in God, but not necessarily by accepting (inspired) books or messengers. To Islam this is the essence of the heretical independence of the human mind that it can, so it thinks, know God without (his) messengers and (his) book(s)--concrete evidences of inner inconcrete revelations.

2) Even though God, to Islam, is utterly transcendent, existent from eternity to eternity, beyond the reach of men's mind, and to whom Muslims give (their) total allegiance (not Muhammed), Christian theologians must understand that Islamic belief in this God is not through transcending minds, but because these minds are dependent ones; dependent upon messengers, books, revelations. That is, Islam depends upon descending revelations (for belief), not upon transcending minds (as can be thought of in doing Christian theology); man, for his belief in Islam, is dependent upon concrete evidence. Again: Faith

is dependent upon evidence and not the other way around. This has often been an impeditive point that stood between dialoguing Christians and Muslims.

3) To Islam, God, because of his transcendence, is an impersonal God--who comes down (through his messenger and revelations) to man. When Muslims do theology, therefore, they do so from an inspirational point of view. And this can be very frustrating to Christian scholars who think that Muslim believers are "moody," rigid, don't want to see, etc. But if Christian scholars, through their confessional theology, are able to see how it is that Islam does not see man as capable of transcendence, hence doing theology to them is possible only when "inspired" (to do so) and not at any given moment, schedule, or time, Christians would be able to understand how it is that theology to Islam is not an occupation but a way of life, and that the best theology made in Muslim countries is made at cafes and street corners, not in high power committees and world class gatherings. To Muslims, this kills the (their) spirit of theology, even though it excites human expectations in theology.

What, then, is the way for dialogue with Islam? Being a Christian theologian, with only expertise on Islam, I can only speak of the way with which Christian theology must dialogue. To do this, it is my distinct belief, having encountered world-wide numerous dialogues and contacts between the two, while standing on Christian grounds, that the purpose of dialogue cannot and should not have as its goal "conversion," but witness; witness to and from one to the other.

For better or for worse, Christian theologians are not in the position of dialoguing with Islam from a point of choice but of necessity. This is for several reasons, but chief among these reasons is that in the face of a world-wide advancing of Islam, Christian culture finds itself at the erosion of its syndromes from which it had once defined itself, that came from European Renaissance, Enlightenment, Protestant and Catholic Reformation's insistence upon sola fide or its alternative, the authoritarian church culture, or the idea of an ex officio authority. European and North American dominance is fading, and with it is Christian theology, but not Christianity itself as a faith, since it is the opinion of this writer that Christianity does not depend upon theology for its advancement, nor upon a Euro-American dominance. What is happening, because of Islam's advancement, is perhaps

a third Reformation in Christianity. Christian theologians are, therefore, in a position of need to dialogue. This is because at the heart of the matter is (Christian theology's) survival. But the mistake of Christian theologians, in this writer's opinion, is that we think that by advancing our (Christian) ideas, in the face of advancing Islam, we perpetuate Christianity. No! And this must be understood both psychologically and theologically by Christian theologians. The reason for the historical advancement of Islam was not, and is not today, that Islam defended their faith. Islam does not defend a faith; Islam proclaims (the Muslim) faith. If anything, it is that Islam is psycho-theologically converted by its faith, and it is that (Islamic) faith that defends and advances them. And if we Christians are honest, we would find ample examples in our history that psycho-historically reversed the matter. We used to even call "them" "defenders of the faith." This mentality of "us defending Christianity" is defeating us in the face of those who believe that it is (their) faith that defends them. What then is the key for dialogue with Islam? Confession! The Christian gospel must stand, in our theology, as still offering eternal truth and hope for both heaven and this age. The matter in our court is, I believe, as Professor Albert C. Outler has put it, to be the "crisis between (our) theology and (our) culture."<sup>1</sup> Professor Outler is astute enough not to term the crisis as a crisis of Christian faith, but of (our) theology.

I believe the key question, therefore, which Christian theologians must ask themselves, in dialoguing with Muslim scholars, is whether our purpose is to dialogue theology or to proclaim (Christian) faith.

#### A DEFINITION

But where does all this lead us? It leads us to confessional theology as the key for dialogue and by which (our) faith is sensed by others (in dialogue) as valid by virtue of this sensed trust (in us), hence we, too, become recognized as trustworthily entrusted to dialogue that faith. I venture, therefore, to introduce a definition here for both, and in hopes the definition is acceptable to both sides. I would like to introduce the term "confessional dialogue," in place of religious dialogue--in world religious conferences. These dialogues should not have argument at their basic motive, not comparative religious analyses, not even unconscious attitudinal supremacies, but a proclamation of the one God, his majesty, actions of salvation by public and

official acknowledgment. Religious dialogues should not concentrate, as they do, on distilling (comparative) knowledge but on (the) practical attitudes of openness and readiness to welcome dialogues as divine initiatives, and this is the better definition for confessions and for dialogues in religion. That is, those in dialogue should aim at exposing their own faith for the purpose of changing their attitudes: from (giving and receiving) knowledge to giving (and receiving) thanks as the subsequent reaction to this divine initiative that leads them and us to dialogues (forms or forums of confessions). Thus, thanksgiving, also, is defined by openness, to God, as the reason for public expression. In contrast to "works," therefore, our dialogues should be for the witness that deals with God's deeds, not man's, but that are only addressed to man--dialogue.

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1. Albert C. Outler. *Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Abingdon, Nashville: 1954, p. 6.

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"And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in Allah. Surely, it is He Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

(*The Holy Quran*, 8:62)

## HOW I ACCEPTED ISLAM

Abdur Raqueeb Wali

I was raised in a very small industrial city in Pennsylvania. It was one of those smoke filled cities that had that repugnant odor from the steel mills, mixed with a bit of smelly polluted (Delaware) river combined with the addition of an oil refinery to make a nice choking mixture. My religious life at that time was void, in fact my spiritual leader was a Dr. Jekyll (a long time dope user, who administers or sold heroin to young people) who wore eighty dollar kicks and three hundred dollar suits. It was during those days that I witnessed a dead junkie for the first time, which I believe changed my life. He was a young man lying in a lonely deserted funky toilet, he had been dead for weeks. Dry white foam protruded from his mouth like oatmeal, his black skin was transformed into a dirty green color. As I stood gazing at the body with tears filling my eyes like rushing waters and running down my cheeks, he reminded me of someone very dear to me, maybe a brother or a sister. His eyes were popping out of his head like a frightened monkey with an expression on his face, as if asking the question--Why didn't someone tell me? This image stayed in my mind for many years.

I was a thief, hustler, used drugs and smoked more pot than anyone in this world, at least that's what I believed. That is, I smoked twenty-four hours sometimes a day. I had two young ladies supporting me so I didn't have to work. I had a gig singing in an after-hour night club as a main attraction.

After some time, I met a musician, Abdur Rahman, who played trombone; he was also a non-Ahmadi. He gave me a small paperback book to read; it was entitled "Ahmadiyya or true Islam, by Hazrat Khalife tul Masih II (may Allah give him Jinnatul Firdus). This was my first contact with the Ahmadiyya Community. I met and talked with Brother Khalil Mahmoud for about three hours and from that moment I was an Ahmadi. The first thing Brother Khalil asked me, he said, "Brother? Did you say your prayers?" I was shocked. So I saw in Ahmadiyyat the truth and it was frightening. No more drugs, girls, stealing, cheating. I had to find a job and continue my education.

Since becoming an Ahmadi my blessings have been many--too many in fact to write here. However, to mention a few would be sufficient. Since that blessed day I accepted my faith, I have been around the world at least twice. I was blessed with three trips to Africa, five trips to Qadian, India and Pakistan. I made the Pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca in 1973 and the Ummrah again in 1983 by Allah's Grace. The one thing that really and truly impressed me was the photo of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, may Allah continue rewarding him to the day of Judgment. Amen.

I found that True Ahmadiyyat is TRUE PRAYER, by sincere prayer one can acquire a nearness to the Master of the Worlds. So now my drugs are attained through prayer and my music is the melody of the Holy Quran soaring through my heart. I am at peace in this Divine Movement because the Messiah has come and I have accepted him.

### Sister Shakura Nooriah

All praise belongs to Almighty Allah Who has made me an Ahmadi Muslim. I remember that my parents and grandparents were pious Baptist Christians. My five brothers and six sisters and I were required to attend church regularly. We participated in the youth programs, earnestly memorizing poems, songs and speeches and Bible verses. As an adult, I taught Sunday School class for several years.

There came a time when the high school-age students of my class began to press me for answers which I could not honestly provide them. In particular, the doctrine of the Trinity was confusing to us. The director of the Sunday School Department advised me to "take it on faith." Subsequent research into the facts about the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) and the issue of the divinity of Hazrat Jesus (pbh) caused me to doubt the authenticity of some Christian dogma. This realization started me on a long search for the true path to God.

In the meantime, I had lived my life amid the prevailing culture of the times and found myself seriously examining those values. Materialism, socio-economic exploitation, the rejection of subject peoples' cries for justice, and the generally degrading atmosphere gradually motivated me to leave the church and travel to many

countries to gather knowledge of myself and of humanity at large. The conditions I found in West and East Africa, southern and northern Africa, impressed and depressed me deeply.

In contrast to that experience, I gained employment for a year at an international high school in Europe. Comparison of the cultures and spirituality of the peoples of these two continents increased my insight into the human dilemma. I began to seek the spiritual way. Europe was not my home.

On the return flight home I felt an overwhelming loneliness. Praying continuously and fervently, I asked God to guide me to the right path. And then, miracle of miracles, hardly had the jet landed at Dulles International when a voice called out to me. I recognized the young son of two friends of mine; he was in the company of a group of Muslims, whom I later realized were Ahmadis.

Greeting me, he informed me that his name was changed to Daud and he was now Muslim. Looking at me with concern, he inquired how I was feeling and I found myself describing how I had been praying for Divine guidance in my life.

Praising Almighty Allah for this opportunity to preach, he immediately began to instruct me as to the truth of Islam. Arranging for me to go straight to the Fazl Mosque (Washington), he selected several books on Islam and handed them to me.

Somewhat dazed by this sudden immersion into an Islamic environment, I accepted the books gratefully. After settling back into the routine of career and family life, I began to read some of the books, starting with *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*. Thus I entered the world of Ahmadiyyat as a humble and uncertain seeker. I continued to read and pray daily for guidance.

By His magnificent Grace and Mercy, Allah Ta'ala showed me in a series of the most vivid, clear and unearthly beautiful dreams, in a convincing way, that He was guiding me to Islam. He showed me the Holy Quran and what I later learned was the Kalima (in large Arabic letters on my window). There were dreams of the Fazl mosque, of Ahmadi ladies and their children. From the mission house I saw on the distant horizon a scenic masterpiece painted by no worldly artist-

-a breathtaking view of the sunlit sky and sea and mountains meeting in symmetry, something like a lighthouse or beacon. I was told that I, too, could live in this neighborhood and was shown a sparkling clean, freshly painted vacant house; it had shiny clean floors, white walls and a bay window. The exterior seemed to be of red brick.

In this same dream I saw a beautiful lady wearing a white burqa who said she would help me decorate my house when I moved into the neighborhood. This dignified lady was Sahibzadi Amtul Qayyum, whom we affectionately call Bibi Qayyum. She has taught me very kindly about Ahmadiyya Islam. And I did, by the Grace of Allah, move into the neighborhood. There have been dreams and visions and words from "behind the veil." In 1979, without hesitating, I signed Bai'at. I praise Allah for His Compassion and Mercy. I humbly request prayers for Divine guidance, protection and strength, that I may be steadfast in faith and good works.

Once when I was considering becoming a Muslim, I was invited to visit a non-Ahmadi masjid. As soon as I entered that place I knew it was not for me and, after a hurriedly murmured apology, I escaped from there. That is how I knew that Ahmadiyyat is the true Islam. Direct personal contact with Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih III (pbh) and Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IV (may he live long) has been extremely important in encouraging me to strive vigorously to be a good Ahmadi Muslim. May it please Allah. Amin. Blessings on all Ahmadis who have helped me.

### Sister Fatima Taha

I first heard of Islam several years ago, but was strongly discouraged from pursuing any questions and never was able to have any contact with any Muslims. As my life took a long, circular walk with much unhappiness and with a search for something I never was able to understand, I finally was led by Allah to meet a Brother and a Sister Ahmadi. Through them I was able to be introduced to Islam. Truly a miracle had occurred and for the first time many of my questions were and are being answered. I feel that my growth in Ahmadiyya has created a harmony in myself I never experienced before. Taking Bi'at was the most humbling experience of my life and has opened doors in my relationship with Allah I never dreamed possible.



I found a deep fascination in Arabic being the Mother of all languages. The fact that the Holy Quran is written in Arabic without any changes made a deep impression on me. I had difficulty in understanding how the Bible could be written in so many versions and with so many interpretations by so many different people. How they could bypass and drop books left me very confused.

The emphasis on all the Prophets like Abraham, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, also answered one of my questions. For the first time I was reassured when I discovered that Jesus, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, did not die on the cross but traveled to Kashmir, India. That Muhammed, peace and blessings be on him, was the last Prophet and the Holy Quran is the last Holy Book is so reassuring. I had great difficulty for many years deep in my heart in dealing with the "Trinity." I only knew that not praying directly to Allah made me very uncomfortable. So once again, when I was introduced to and learned about Islam, all of the above answered my deepest questions. Along with the fact that our Promised Messiah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is here according to the Holy Quran is humbling knowledge. Alhumdulillah.

Another aspect of Islam is the teaching of equality without discrimination to rank, color, wealth, or office. I had always felt that one should not be classified by any of the above and that everyone has much to offer. To be able to make Salat in congregation without such regard is an awesome experience and this strongly impressed me.

The warm welcome I received when attending Juma the first time and the warmth that has always followed humbles me. The availability of all the reading material, tapes, and conversation was instrumental in developing my understanding.

The role of women in the Western culture had become a role that I was not comfortable with. After much searching and taking many unanswerable and unfulfilling pathways, I now feel that I have come to discover the role of the woman. As I grow in this area, the more aware I am of the importance of Lajana, Ahmadiyya activities, the significance of dress, education, chastity, and prayer.

To do good deeds and good works has always seemed significant to me but until I was introduced to Islam, I only then began to

understand the true importance of them in the life of an Ahmadi.

May the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam continue to be propagated and shared with others so that they too will have the chance to learn and understand as I have. Alhumdulillah.

### Rashid Ahmad

Throughout my adult life, whenever I had met or read about people who were Muslims or knowledgeable of Islam, I was always impressed with their personal character. These people were more in tune with themselves and their position in the world, and their relationship with God in a way that was different than those who I knew of other faiths. They, although not perfect, were more steadfast, moral, knowledgeable and brotherly than other people that I knew. These people have had a significant impact in my life and are in part responsible for me being a Muslim today.

There are four basic reasons for which I accepted Islam. The first reason is that Islam accepts all prophets of God, therefore as a Muslim, I am able to respect all religions and prophets although men may have changed the original message sent by the prophets. The world is very large and there are many and diverse people on the earth. Among these many and diverse people, there are numerous religions, each sharing common moral values and spiritual ambitions. I've always had difficulty denying another person's faith or the legitimacy of the founder of a religious faith. As a Muslim, I became relieved of this burden because Islam teaches that there isn't a people on earth that haven't been sent a messenger from Allah. Therefore, all religions at some time were inspired by a messenger of Allah. However, men have corrupted the teachings and writings of these prophets. We have the Holy Quran to verify the authenticity of what is presented today as the teachings of the prophets. Although we may not accept all teachings presented by other religions today, we nonetheless honor and pay homage to all messengers of Allah (peace and blessings be upon them All).

The second reason is that Islam proclaims that all Muslims are brothers to one another. There is no superiority or inferiority amongst Muslims, based upon creed, nationality, social status, or wealth. The

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only one who can exalt one above another is Allah, and this will be based on our faith, good works, prayer, and fasting. From Islam I have learned that Allah bestows upon him He chooses, what He wills, and we will be judged by how we respond with that which has been bestowed upon us. There are Muslims from all walks of life, all races and colors, and Islam teaches that each is equal to another in every way.

The third reason I accepted Islam is because of the life and example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon Him). The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon Him) provided mankind with the most perfect example of faith, love for Allah, love for all mankind, courage, steadfastness, compassion, and morality that the world has ever known.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon Him) lived as a prophet amongst men for twenty-three years. He provided men during his time with the best example of living the deen. For men of our time we have a wealth of knowledge and advice concerning all aspects of spiritual life, social life, and understanding the meaning of the Holy Quran, which is preserved in the Hadiths. In studying the life of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon Him) I became truly amazed at the different aspects of his personality that were exhibited during different periods of his mission. I believed that he was truly guided by God. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon Him) and the early Muslims were severely persecuted when he began to spread the message of Islam. During this period Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon Him) proved to be a man of true resolve because he did not revert in his effort to call men to Allah. He and the community showed great steadfastness and patience in their willingness to withstand persecution and brutality from his enemies without fighting back. When left no other alternative but to defend the Muslims and protect the faith, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon Him) was the most courageous fighter who, with the help of Allah, made the Muslims victorious against what appeared to be insurmountable odds. As the political leader of the Islamic empire, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon Him) established a land which guaranteed and protected the rights and faiths of all Muslims and non-Muslims alike and created a society which exhibited morality, true brotherhood, and was more free of inequality and oppression than any kingdom the world had previously or since ever

known. It was through studying the life of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon Him) that I came to realize that no single man could have had such a great impact on the world for 1400 years unless he was truly a prophet of God. It was through his example that I was able to see how the teachings of the Holy Quran could be put into practice in my daily life.

The fourth and most important reason I accepted Islam was the personal effect that reading the Holy Quran had on me. The first Quran that I read was given to me as a gift. It was bound in a paperback cover. Externally it appeared more like a novel than a religious text and certainly from its appearance no one would think that inside contained the words of God. It didn't even have the original Arabic, however at the time I wasn't aware that Quran in Arabic is the original words of Allah transmitted through the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon Him). Regardless of all these things, when I read the meaning expressed in English, I could feel that I was reading absolute truth. Here was something written over 1400 years ago, yet to me it seemed as though it was written yesterday. I could immediately relate truths of the Quran to the problems of our world today. To me it was truly a book for all time. Since that time, I have read the Quran more in depth and I am continually astonished by the wisdom and guidance it contains in all areas; spiritual, moral, scientific, and political. Each time I read a Surah, it's as if I am reading it for the first time again. I only hope that, Inshallah, I can continue to read, understand, and obtain blessing from the Holy Quran.

These are the reasons why I accepted Islam. However, I don't think that I would have truly and fully embraced Islam if I were not impressed with the good conduct, piety, and brotherhood exemplified by Muslims in this Jamaat, in America, and throughout the world.

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## CONDITIONS OF "BAI'AT" (INITIATION)

(As announced by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, The Promised Messiah, Mahdi; the formal initiation into the Ahmadiyya Movement started on 23 March, 1889.)

A person who desires to make the covenant should make a solemn pledge:

First, that till death he shall abstain altogether from associating anything with Allah in his worship;

Second, that he shall keep away altogether from falsehood, adultery, gazing lustfully, cruelty, dishonesty, disorder, rebellion and every kind of evil; and shall not allow himself to be carried away by his passions, however strong they may be;

Thirdly, that he shall perform the five daily acts of worship, according to the Divine command and the directions of the Holy Prophet, and shall try to the best of his ability to offer the late night voluntary prayers to invoke the blessings of Allah upon the Holy Prophet, to ask forgiveness for his own sins and for supplicating Allah for His help; and that reminding himself of Allah's bounties, shall praise Him continuously;

Fourthly, that he shall in no way do harm to any of Allah's creatures in general and to Muslims in particular by giving way to his passions, neither with his hands, nor with his tongue, nor by any other means;

Fifthly, that in every state whether of joy or of sorrow, of prosperity or adversity, he shall prove himself faithful to Allah and shall be ready to endure every kind of insult and pain, and that in the hour of misfortune he shall not turn away from Allah but shall rather draw closer to Him;

Sixthly, that he shall not follow vulgar customs and shall guard against all evil inclinations, and shall submit himself completely to the authority of the Holy Quran and shall make the Word of Allah and the practice of the Holy Prophet the guiding principles of his life;

Seventhly, that he shall discard pride and haughtiness and shall pass his days in humility, lowliness, courtesy and meekness;

Eighthly, that he shall hold his religion and the dignity and welfare of Islam dearer than his life, wealth and children and everything else;

Ninthly, that he shall for the sake of Allah, have sympathy for Allah's creatures and shall, to the best of his ability, devote his natural talents towards the promotion of their welfare; and

Tenthly, that he shall establish a relationship of brotherhood with me on condition of obeying me in all good things and adhere to it till the day of his death and that this relationship shall be of such high order that the like of it shall not be found in any worldly relationship either of family or between master and servant.